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FAUCIT OF BALLIOL

VOL. I.

FAUCIT OF BALLIOL

A Story in Two Parts.

BY

HERMAN CHARLES MERIVALE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO

Virginia and Isabel Bateman

IN KINDLY MEMORY OF THEIR MOTHER, MRS. S. F. BATEMAN.

TO WHOSE FIRST SUGGESTION AND FAVOURITE IDEA

(A SHADOW OF AN OLD LEGEND IN MODERN LIFE.

AFTER THE FASHION OF MISS THACKERAY'S FAIRY-TALES)

THE ORIGIN OF THIS STORY IS DUE,

THE BOOK WHICH GREW GRADUALLY OUT OF IT INTO ITS PRESENT

PROPORTIONS IS DEDICATED BY THEIR ATTACHED FRIEND

THE AUTHOR.

HAZARD SIDE,
EASTBOURNE,
September 1881.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

GUY AND DAISY 3

CHAPTER II.

THE BALLIOL ROOMS 18

CHAPTER III.

THE CHRISTCHURCH BALL 30

CHAPTER IV.

HERCULES AND OMPHALE 50

CHAPTER V.

OXONIANA 70

CHAPTER VI.

THE IDYLL 92

CHAPTER VII

MOTHER AND SON 110

CHAPTER VIII.

PAGE

TERM-EATING 122

CHAPTER IX.

FAIRFIELD AND CO. 137

CHAPTER X.

COMING EVENTS 151

CHAPTER XI.

MY LORD AND MY LADY 169

CHAPTER XII.

LADY PEPPERHARROW'S HOUSE-WARMING 187

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. JOHN BRENT 207

CHAPTER XIV.

THE COUP DE GRÂCE 223

CHAPTER XV.

OVER 242

CHAPTER XVI.

ALONE IN THE WORLD 258

PART I.

The Prologue.

"Mephistopheles thrown upon real life, and obliged to manage his own plots, would inevitably make blunders."—*George Eliot.*

7

CHAPTER I.

GUY AND DAISY.

TIME was made for slaves, not chroniclers; and I will not undertake to give an exact date, but say that it might have been some fifteen or twenty years ago, when there met, for the first time, among all the gaieties and forgetfulnesses of an Oxford commemoration, a young fellow of Balliol and a prosperous city merchant's pretty daughter, to make up their minds respectively in about ten minutes, and to know they had made them up in about as many days, that there never could have been such a Balliol fellow, or such a merchant's daughter, in existence before. They saw each other first "on the banks," dear on a summer evening to the heart of every Oxford man, where Guy Faucit of Balliol, who in taking to the lecture-room had not forgotten his victorious

captaincy of the Oxford eight, was engaged in the mysteries and delight of coaching the present crew of his college for a forthcoming struggle with Third Trinity for the cup at Henley. Guy Faucit was a household word among the mariners of Isis: for for three consecutive years he had left Cambridge in the lurch at the historic goal of Mortlake, first with the matchless stroke which kept such a clean and even swing for the whole length of the course, steady and strong as a pendulum, and never quickening up through loss of nerve or want of reserve of power, till just the critical moment of the finish, when he launched out in the sharp, strong spurt which set all the ranks of Oxford cheering from the steamboats, and defied all the pluck and skill of the Light Blue to redress the balance or to score a victory. The "Faucit spurt" was a proverb, like the "botte Nevers" of the "Duke's Motto." Then, as the bones grew stronger-fleshed and the muscles harder, he subsided into the less conspicuous place of number seven, and there, too, with his eyes fixed between the shoulders of his stroke-oar, kept him up to the tradition of the conquering stroke. The stroke would row with an energy not his own when he felt that he had Faucit behind him, and it was not

till Guy, as strong and original at his books as at his oar, had come out as the best first-class man of his year,—repute in this instance being too strong for the alphabetical precedence which at Oxford shrouds the senior classic in a becoming mystery (even before that *facile princeps* for the last vacant fellowship of his college),—and taken his place among the instructors of youth while yet as young a man as many of them, that the sister-university could get a chance of her share in the birthright again. Guy Faucit's was the stalwart six-foot figure which at a round swing-trot kept pace on the shore with the swing of the Balliol eight, as she shot through the narrows of "the gut" as straight as an arrow, under the cunning hand of the Honourable James Gosling, who was cut out by nature for a "cox," and regarded the post as the height of athletic distinction. On Faucit he depended with a filial interest, and implicitly trusted him both to marshal him to victory at Henley, and to "pull him" through his divinity in the schools. James was very much exercised about his "divinity;" but a close examination, on his side, of the ways and customs of examiners, having convinced him that to their minds the word conveyed no theological or doctrinal meaning whatever, but resolved

itself into a question of dates and hard names, he was growing easier about the future. He had learned both to spell and to pronounce Mahershalalhashbaz and Cushanrethashaim, having satisfied himself that, as names of eighteen and sixteen letters respectively, they were the two longest-winded monarchs in the Old Testament, and good enough to floor any examiner withal. He carried an abstract of the list of the kings of Israel about on his shirt-cuffs in the form of a *memoria technica*, while the kings of Judah occupied the crown of his hat. And at the foot of his bed, so that it might meet his eyes the first thing in the morning, and preside over the extinction of his candle at night, was a table inscribed with some mysterious hexameters, beginning—

Crof Deletoff Abaneb Exafna Tembybe Cyruts.

Years afterwards, when his hairs were turning grey, would the Honourable James remember that hexameter, and wonder what on earth it could have meant.

Stowed away among cushions in a punt, in the charge of two happy and envied undergraduates who had the fortune of the acquaintance of Mr. Fairfield of the City, merchant, a certain Miss Daisy Fairfield

watched the advance of the Balliol eight, and of the figure on the opposite bank, from a lair among the grasses on the Oxford side, somewhere below the point where the lazy little Cherwell tumbles into the arms of Isis, just in time to see many a good ship "bumped" into a lower place.

The "'Varsity" barge, and the lesser barges clustered about it, were gay with innumerable buntings and bands of uncompromising brass (for the most part limited in their repertory to the "Hardy Norseman"), and butterfly toilettes of the most fascinating kind and the most tempting variety, setting off the pretty and wholesome faces of the sweet girl wearers, deeply intent upon the results of this near glimpse into the inner life and youth of the mysterious and more favoured animal called man. He, on his side, divided himself even at that early age into the two classes of the susceptible and the hardened, the duck and the brute, and either hung entranced on Beauty's notes, and tethered in her ribands, or walked the banks apart, a thing of misogyny, in a suit of flannel even more decided than usual, or with a face jaundiced with an extra dose of the midnight oil, and contracted into that expression of inward pain so

commonly consequent upon a debauch of Aristotle. Gosling always maintained that, until the birth of Aldrich, no one man had ever caused so much suffering "off his own bat" as the classical monster whom he always described as the "Staggerist."

Close by where Daisy sate was the punt of the champion punter of the world, hanging out for a motto the rather lugubrious legend, innocent of a personal pronoun, "Saved the lives of many gentlemen." And, dressed in all the bright and daring combinations of colour which Young Summer rejoices in, to the encouragement of healthy-minded people who believe in colours and combinations, the beautiful Christchurch meadows, with dainty little Merton set like a gem in the centre background, looked their pleasantest upon the scene. Not without reason does the Oxonian cherish in his heart a placid conviction that he may set his Christchurch meadows against the famous "backs of the colleges" in the Light-Blue land, and not be afraid of the comparison.

There then sate Daisy Fairfield, revelling in the beauty and interest of the scene, and in the comfort of her situation, as she nestled among her cushions, trusting herself to the adroitness of her youthful

punters, whose control over their cumbrous instrument occasionally suggested that under more hazardous conditions they might be more likely to destroy the lives of many gentlemen than to save them.

Except, perhaps, the paddle of a canoe, nothing is more capricious than a punt-pole in the ambitious hands of youth, possessed as it is of all the malignity of inanimate objects to a degree not emulated till the invention of the bicycle, that iron fiend, which, when running away with a man down-hill, produces in his mind a sense of helplessness surpassing show. Jem Gosling's first appearance in a punt was never forgotten by his friends, when he embarked upon a race without having tried his hand before, impressed by the obvious easiness of the thing. He got his bark, or had it propelled for him, into the mid-current, swung it round slowly twice on its own axis, something receding in the process, then walked straight over the side after his punt-pole into the water, and wallowed. Daisy's guides, however, were a little more skilled than that, and at this moment were resting on their poles, cradled by the waving grasses under the shore.

"It's a splendid sight," said Daisy, with enthusiasm, as she saw the Balliol crew coming up with a will, the

eight broad and red-striped backs working together like a machine. "Splendid!" she exclaimed, her eyes lighting up as she watched the men.

Daisy Fairfield was one of those who move and speak as goddesses among women, with a girlhood promising a very majesty of maturity. Hers was the veined-marble complexion, with the paleness of statue-land, not of ill-health, touched with a tender rose by exercise or excitement; the tall and free and supple figure which matches such complexions best; the violet eyes with the black bull's eye, and the wealth of wavy hair, of chestnut toned with gold, in all the pride and glory of eighteen. No touch of hardness was in the look or in the voice then, to mar the picture with a thought of ill. It was a picture of happiness and goodness undefiled.

Oh ye men and women, oh ye women and men, who from selfishness, vindictiveness, perversity, love of gain, any of the paltry and self-avenging motives which grow so fast by what they feed on, and spring up like brambles round the strait gate and the narrow way, to choke the access further,—ye who, in despite of love's simplest message, seem to delight in working your neighbour harm, to the baffling of

the comprehension of more single-purposed hearts, do you never think, I wonder, when you see the outward and visible traces of your doings on the faces and lives of those, at whose expense you did them? do the terrible warnings of the olden law carry with them no fear, no starting of the conscience that will not die in you, by whatever name you call it—evolution, or indigestion, or what not? Under those outward and visible signs, too often, lies an inward and invisible scar beyond your healing, though it was not beyond your making; a scar of the heart or of the mind, or maybe of the soul. Go down on those straightened knees of yours, even at the eleventh hour of the night, and pray, though it be but in the name of the poor modern clay-god called Humanity, that you may yet do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you. If you have wronged your neighbour, ask him to forgive you, and if he humbly holds a better faith than yours, remember this—his creed teaches him to ask for pardon, even as he is ready to give it freely when he is freely asked. But I cannot so read the Divine and loving command as to see that it enjoins the impossible, and asks of man what he cannot do, to forgive unasked. As with the Divine pardon, so with the human, the one condition

precedent of forgiveness would seem to be this—let the wrongdoer come, and ask to be forgiven. The Lord "forgave that servant" because he asked Him.

But I am anticipating here, and would not mar my own memory further, of Daisy Fairfield as she was in those Oxford days.

Up the river then came the Balliol eight, cheered by an indiscriminate band of admirers racing up the Berkshire bank, and heralded by the "long stern swell" of Faucit's steady and musical lungs.

A pleasant companion-picture was he to the eye, the English athlete of some eight-and-twenty, with the big forehead and the clear blue eyes, which shall explain themselves later.

"Put your back into it, three." And three, conscience-stricken, put in his back.

"Put his back into what?" asked Daisy, maliciously or in good faith. "Where else is it to go? It's big enough, certainly."

Tompkins of Trinity explained how backs were put in.

"Oh! And who is the director-general of backs on the other bank, who runs so fast and shouts so loud?"

"You don't mean to say you don't know?" cried

Bones of Balliol, scandalized. "Why that's Faucit; not P. W.,—the other."

"Not P. W.,—the other," repeated Daisy, reflectively. "Indeed! This becomes really interesting, and will take time. Forgive me my ignorance, and tell me, first, who is P. W.? I want to reduce the situation to its primitive elements."

"P. W.'s Faucit of Exeter, the mathematical fellow, a long thin man in goggles, who was proctor last year, and got it hot in the theatre. I wish you'd heard it. The men all let out like mad, for he'd proctorized half the place."

"How did he do that, and what is it when it's done? I'm learning, you know."

"Well, proctorizing means having a man up for something—going about in mufti, or having a spread at the Mitre, or that sort of thing."

"It sounds very bad, and should be punished. What does he do for it?"

"Generally gets a man gated, you know," said Bones. "It's an awful nuisance in the summer term."

"It would be. Proctorizing seems to be what the police call taking up."

"Something in the same line. But the proctor's

the peeler and the beak all in one—first runs you in and then sits on you. That's not fair any way."

"As far as I understand it, it isn't. Why don't you apply for a Habeas Corpus when you're gated, and bring an action for false imprisonment?"

"Oh," commented Tompkins, "that's law. We haven't got any law here, except the Vice-Chancellor's Court. He's dead the other way."

"No law?" said Daisy. "What a delightful place! How one lives and learns. I never knew that the University was a sort of modern Alsatia."

"What's that?" enquired Bones.

"Don't you know? They ought to teach you."

"Don't teach us much later down than Rome. It's not the form."

"How odd the difference of form is," remarked Daisy. "They don't teach us girls much higher up than the piano. And my education has been so neglected that I never heard of P. W., or of the other. And now I want to know all about him too. You have given me such a description of P. W.'s moral and physical qualities in a few words, Mr. Bones, that I believe I should know him if I met him. Now tell me about the other."

"Ah! that's another sort altogether. That's Faucit of our place, commonly called 'The Clipper,' and familiarly loved as old Guy. He was the best stroke the 'Varsity eight ever had, and he's a crack tennis-player besides."

"He might have been one of the best men in the eleven too," chimed in Tompkins, "only he said he couldn't do everything, and hadn't the time to get out to Cowley Marsh often enough."

"But he can do everything for all that," added Bones. "Just look at what he did in the brains line—got the Balliol before he came up, and the Hertford in his first year, and the Ireland in his second, and a double-first in Mods. before you knew where you were."

"And only didn't do the same in Greats," said Tompkins, "because he liked classics best, and said he didn't believe in a man trying too much, just like the cricket."

"Besides, he wanted to have time for his own reading, which he's very fond of," chorussed Bones. "And he got a fellowship at the old place before he went in for his degree, and the dons said they wouldn't have it done again."

"Because it wouldn't be fair on the others," quoth

Tompkins. "And now he's the best lecturer and the jolliest don in the place, and as good a fellow with the men of other colleges as he is with his own."

"And still coaches the eight as nobody else can coach it, and puts on half-fifteen a year at tennis. Ran old Barre himself hard the other day, at the fair odds and side-walls and openings."

"Putting on half-fifteen and running old Barre must be wonderfully exciting," smiled Daisy, inwardly delighted with the honest and lovable enthusiasm of her young squires. "You all seem quite fond of 'the other.'"

"I should think we were," said Bones.

"Grand old trump," added Tompkins. And so "The Works of Guy Faucit," as they would have been called in Homer, were sung in the true epic style by his two chroniclers.

Daisy Fairfield felt really interested and attracted by the history, as she had been at once by the striking appearance of the man with the strong rather than handsome features, the curly crisp brown hair, the fair Saxon complexion, and the look of power upon the face. Daisy was a student in heads, and a foe to the commonplace. She might have asked and heard more

of Faucit, had not the inevitable chaperon—for let not my readers believe that this scene had passed without one—at this moment woke from a refreshing slumber. She was a nice, pleasant-looking specimen of portly middle-age, brooding over the youthful three like a mature duck.

"I think, my dear, I should like to go ome to tea," said Mrs. Pepperharrow. "There's the ball to-night, and you mustn't overeat yourself."

"Overeat herself, Mrs. Pepperharrow!" said the astonished Bones.

"The eat of the sun, Mr. Bones, is great upon the river."

"Oh! quite so. I beg your pardon."

CHAPTER II.

THE BALLIOL ROOMS.

Midnight! yet not an eye in the academic city closed in sleep. No eye, at least, belonging to any one with a proper measure of self-respect; for all the world and his sweetheart were at that year's Christchurch Ball. It was what is called a grand commemoration in the year I write of, and beautiful Alma Mater was in her blandest mood of motherhood, favoured by weather which showed her everywhere at her best. Foliage and sward looked their softest and greenest in the fair gardens of Worcester and St. John; and the leaves of Magdalen Walks, with their belt of trees girdling the old enclosure, whispered their confidences to young undergraduate lovers and their goddesses for the hour, and discreetly kept the secret of those they listened to

in return. The fantastic figures perched on their pedestals in Magdalen quadrangle grinned sympathetically at the young people who came in and went out in a more advanced stage of the world's most chronic malady. It was a fine time for pairing, and the opportunity was not lost. Many a young and ambitious fellow of his college, vowed only the week before to celibacy and the comfortable selfishness of the Common Room, began to count the cost of deserting academic life for the bar or the press, winning name and fame by persuasive orations at Westminster, or trenchant witticisms in the 'Saturday Review,' and leaving the dead languages to bury their dead, for the sake of some pair of bright eyes which had suddenly flashed in upon his solitude, and burned decided holes in his trencher-cap and gown.

On the evening before Show Sunday he had been proudly looking forward into a distant future, to the day when he might stand before the world of his measuring-rod as the Provost or Principal of his college, after serving all the stages of tutor and bursar in due course. Then, perhaps, he would take unto himself a helpmeet upon proper prudential and academic principles, suitable to him in years and views of life, to sit

at his feet and the bottom of his table, and shine with the reflected radiance of his scholastic glory. To him, perhaps, as the old stage-directions say, entered on that Show Sunday some gracious young vision in flowers and lace, entirely frivolous and illogically sweet, with no special charm for many but the bloom of English girlhood, suddenly to upset all his calculations through the open sesame of an "introduction," under the broad interlacing branches which span the Broad Walk of Christchurch in the earliest order of architecture, to the silver Sunday music of Oxford's innumerable bells. Without rhyme or reason would young Suckling of Oriel change his theories of existence at this touch of harlequin Fortune's motley wand, and contemplate "das irdische Glück" from an altogether different point of view. After all, was he not born to get it "genossen" in the time-honoured fashion of the majority of healthy-hearted mankind?

Is it possible that some such spirit as this, summoned in his inscrutable purpose from the vasty deeps of life by the great Enchanter's voice, overshadowed Guy Faucit's strong will and sober nature with a warning, on that afternoon by the river? Even as he was swinging steadily up the bank, intent as usual

just upon what he was doing and no more, keenly marking the merits and defects of the young athletes working their best under his experienced eye, and inwardly resolving the possible results of effecting a change in the boat between numbers six and seven, he caught a rapid glimpse, in passing, of a girl's figure propped up among the cushions of a punt, in an attitude of genuine interest in the doings of his crew. He just marked her in passing, and as he was crossing to the Balliol barge with a boatful of other men, after the cruise was finished, he saw her again, closer and more at his leisure, springing ashore from her little bark under the emulous guardianship of Bones and Tompkins. They passed him close by, and as Bones saluted him with the proper sign of respect due to his tutor, mingled with an obvious dash of pride in his own new duties, Faucit instinctively raised his hat in answer, and bestowed a very honest and respectful look of admiration upon Daisy Fairfield. Whether she looked at him or not at the same moment I cannot undertake to say; but certainly she saw him. And when a rapid little Parthian glance shot back at him over her shoulder when she had gone a little further with Bones (Tompkins, the sly

dog, was sedulously paying court to good Mrs. Pepperharrow), it fell upon a responsive place; for the fact is, that Faucit of Balliol was looking after her with all his might and main.

"Good Heavens!" he thought to himself, "what a lovely girl!" But the vision passed; and Guy Faucit, his hands in his pockets in attitude profound, whistling to himself a few rather thoughtful bars, strolled homewards through the busy corn-market to his rooms in Balliol.

The rooms in Balliol, which he had tenanted ever since he took his first class five years before, and had gradually furnished and improved with every evidence of scholarship and taste, making a hobby of them, seemed that evening, he couldn't imagine why, to want something he couldn't conceive what. The pictures were few and grave and good, carefully chosen and paid for at a good round price, for the most part the most careful reproductions that the engraver or his kindred artists could furnish of the solid masterpieces of an olden day. There Titian's daughter carried her fruit and flowers, with the fair head thrown back in the attitude as perfect in its audacity of pose as in its nature and its grace; there the pretty chocolate-

girl, whom Dresden loves through the eyes of Liotard, proffered her dish of sober drink with the slightly contemptuous air of a young person something above her work, and apt to dream of the marble halls which a posse of Saxon admirers had no doubt placed at her disposal; there Rembrandt's bonnie wife sat perched upon the knee of her painter-husband, her head and his twisted round, the one festively and the other coquettishly, over the brimming glass of honest German beer; and there, in its deep unfathomable awe, the despair of painters past, present, and to come, not all lost or wanting even through the medium of the copyist, above the watching reverence of the upturned baby-faces, the strange, ineffable, thrilling mystery of God-head upon earth looked down upon the gazer, out of the eyes of the mother and child of Our Lady of San Sisto.

The books which lined the walls were kindred to the pictures: so that nothing seemed wanting in the two classes of home-companions, which, with a comfortable dog curled up on the hearth-rug, make the most loving and responsive company for the *μέροψ ἀνὴρ* of a worthy mould, who lives, from choice or destiny, alone. They were chosen for reading, and looked all

read, gradually gathered with a gradual patience, so that they were still small in bulk though great in matter. Bindings and editions were not neglected, though not essential: a clear, readable type being the only definite condition grafted upon the contents of the book. The Catholic taste of the reader was evident from the various nature of the subject-matters, and evidently had chosen for its province the masterpieces of style and thought rather than any special line of study. English literature was the staple of the collection, though French and German had their proper part in the arrangements, and Latin and Greek, as became a classical tutor, were respectfully, but not overpoweringly, represented.

The little inner sanctum—for in the larger room the pupils were received—told a tale of another kind. Stags' heads spoke of long-vacation stalkings in the North; an amazing collection of miscellaneous and polyglottic pipes recorded wanderings over half the tobacco-smoking world; and silver oars and silver racquets, and tankards whose very sight suggested the Elysian pleasures of a "long drink," sang of many victories in the athletic field. In such a little bachelor's paradise, what was it of which Faucit, who

had grown into his life and his rooms, can suddenly have felt an unrealized want that evening? Did he miss the serpent, or the serpent's inducement?

He had ordered a quiet and solitary dinner in his rooms, and in due course his servant appeared with it. The college cook, a discriminating artist, who was quite as capable of catering for the cultivated taste of a travelled fellow, as for satisfying the zoological appetites of undergraduates with hunkiform beeves and mutton, provided Faucit with a dainty, but not the less solid repast, of which Guy, whatever the nature of his reflections, ate with an irreproachable zest and a generous capacity, mixing his liquors in defiance of the modern science of Dyspepticism, and correcting bitter beer with his favourite Burgundy. The meal over, he had installed himself in his leathern chair, with a pet pipe and a cup of black coffee, slippered and magazined, when a knock at the door interrupted his occupations.

"Come in," he said, not altogether sorry to be interrupted, for, hard-worker as he was, he was gregarious of soul; and the figure of the youthful Bones presented itself.

"Hallo, Bones; what do you want?"

"Well, sir, I came to ask if you'd excuse me from reading essay to-morrow. The fact is, I've been about all day with friends, and haven't got it done."

"In which state you certainly can't read it," said Faucit. "But why don't you go to your rooms now, and work away till you've done it?"

"It would take me a good long time, sir. I'm always slow over my essay-work. And I've got to go, at least I want to go, to the Christchurch Ball to-night."

"Well, we mustn't be too particular at Commemoration time. But remember, the schools ain't very far off, my boy, and you want a good deal of brushing up."

"I know I do, sir; and you're so kind in working with me, that I'd even give the ball up and get through the grind if you wished it."

"I don't wish it," answered the other. "You'll have a day or two after the balls and flower-shows before you go down, and you can finish off the essay easily enough. I suppose it'll be a good ball?"

"First-rate, sir. The thing's to be really well done. Ain't you thinking of going?"

"I?" said Faucit. "No; I've some work of my own on hand, and there's nobody up this time I know

much about. You seem better off. Are you going with the ladies I saw you with by the river to-day?"

"I'm going to meet them there, sir. Did you see them?"

"Just in passing. The girl looked very pretty."

"That's just what she is," said Bones, "and no mistake about that. And she's as nice as she's pretty, too. My governor knows hers in business in London, so they asked me to call when they came on Saturday, and I've been doing the right thing for them all the week. I had some waltzes with her at the Masonic Ball last night which I shan't forget in a hurry, and I'm going to repeat the dose to-night. I wish you'd come, sir. I should like to introduce you to Miss Fairfield."

"That's her name, is it?" said Guy. "I don't do much in the ball way now, and haven't since I took my degree: so I'm afraid I shouldn't be much addition to the party. Dance away, and good luck to you."

"Thank you, sir. I'll be sure to have the essay done before we go down. I wish you'd come; but if you won't, good night."

"Good night, Bones." And the youngster took his departure.

Guy Faucit smoked on awhile, drank his coffee, and meditated over his magazine. Then he sat down at a well-covered writing-table, and plunged into pen and ink. He had made himself a good name already among the Saturday Reviewers, then a band of keen and ardent spirits, who had given a new impulse to journalism by their fresh and powerful and witty work, and attracted many a young college ambition to their ranks. Strong sense and scholarship were Faucit's best points in the contribution, and even at that age he was not fond of the practice of anonymous vivisection. He did his work carefully that evening, and rather slowly, more than once travelling away from it; but the power of concentration, which was his in a marked degree, existed then as afterwards, and he had a habit of mastering any stray access of wilfulness in an uncompromising way. *Age quod agis* stood him in good stead as his motto in everything; and he had once distinguished himself by entering under the head of his "favourite occupation," in one of those senseless feminine albums which record a series of imaginary preferences improvised under pressure of invention, "whatever I happen to be doing."

So he finished his article at the cost of some

increase in the tax on his time, smoked another pipe and turned over the pages of a new novel, and then began to meditate on bed. He looked at his bed and he looked at his watch, *plurima mente revolvens;* and he began to undress, and he walked up and down his room, and again he sat and meditated. Then he contemplated his night-gown comfortably folded on his pillow, while only the sounds of night came up to him from the quiet quadrangle. Then he took a sudden excursion to his wardrobe, and surveyed his evening clothes, submitting them evidently to a mental test of comparison. Then he visited his snuggery again, and from the glass behind the mantel-piece took down a ticket. Then he made that indescribable but definite sound to himself, which appears in the play-books under the form of "Humph"; and finally, as with a mind suddenly made up at the price of some self-disapproval, he put himself into those evening clothes of his rapidly enough, and after a placid exit through the porter's lodge—that official regarding him with some respectful astonishment—he swung down the street at a steady pace, and as the clock was on the stroke of twelve he found himself among the guests at the Christchurch Ball.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHRISTCHURCH BALL.

Daisy Fairfield was in the full flush of a young girl's triumph. If I could choose my experiences of the raptures of life, I should like to be a great statesman for a season, a victorious soldier for another, a successful author for a third, and a reigning beauty for a fourth. In the absolute intoxication of effect I imagine that the last of the four may have the best of us all. There must be something in that spontaneous homage, not called out as the result of labour or of years, but offered without reserve at the shrine of youth in its most winning natural guise, by statesman and soldier and author and everybody else, which has no parallel in the grosser experiences of man.

Daisy Fairfield tasted the cup to the full in this her year of grace. Her father was prominent among the sober race of London merchants, becoming fast less well represented than it used to be, who built solid fortunes by solid and honourable work, and without attempting to vie with the magnificent palaces of Belgravian and Kensington districts, which with all their size look as if they were meant to be sold to a company at an early date, contented themselves with strong and comfortable houses on the slopes of Bloomsbury, or, under the influence of the westward-ho movement which seems to be the history of all big towns, in the regions of Portland Place.

In those broad and airy latitudes our Daisy bloomed. Her father's friends were of that large and varied class which probably, amongst a good deal of dulness, supplies about the pleasantest varieties of London society, I do not say of social life. I suppose that the socio-geographer would map it out as part of the "upper middle," whatever that dissective formula may imply. Lawyers rising and risen make perhaps the chief staple of it, and a pleasant staple too. Notwithstanding the fabled preference of the sex for soldiers and curates, the barristers hold their ground very well, by right,

I suppose, of the power of talk which is presumed by privilege and practice to belong to them, though in too many cases on slight ground enough. The "chambers" which are supposed to receive them daily seem to have a very doubtful existence in some cases, and to leave them free for dinners and balls and junketings innumerable, even sometimes for those two haunts of the acknowledged idlers, which stamp imprudent youth as "no good to anybody" in the working world—the Park and the five o'clock tea. But others, and, as a rule, it must be admitted pleasanter ones, fight their wig-armed battle of life to a purpose under the god-like discipline of patience, and mean business, as soon as they can get it, very emphatically. In the same set are their successful seniors to encourage them; and the ambitious junior who has just been getting perhaps snubbed in court, much to an inward moving of the spirit and a conviction that till you become a Q.C., and can command success, justice is but a name, is consoled by dining at the same table with the kindly old judge who inserted that flea in his ear, and makes up for it by bestowing on him words of friendly counsel, and the results of his own full life and experience.

And the while, and perhaps better still, young Tyro is consoled by a flirtation with his lordship's pretty daughter, whose bright eyes beam upon him with unprofessional encouragement, while her lips assure him that there was a time, and a very long time, when papa despaired of ever getting any business whatever.

"Of course he says he never had any connection at all, Mr. Tyro, and got into a big practice at once by his own merits, dear old thing. And his merits were always splendid, you know. But mamma told me that it was nothing of the kind, and that when I was born she didn't know how they were ever going to get on. And if it hadn't been for a first cousin down in the north who was a big attorney, and wanted to do him a good turn, I don't believe papa would ever have done anything at the bar at all." So the young counsellor lives on hope, and retails pleasant circuit-stories in a very cheery and attractive way.

Rising and working journalists and writers, doing mysterious somethings in unconfessed anonyme, and reputed to be dreadfully clever, with here and there a lawless dramatist, the subject of much shaking of the head and evil omen, as of one hurrying downwards

on the broad path of self-destruction, but nevertheless of some secret admiration and envy, as the privileged denizen of a mysterious world not open to everybody —these and other waifs and strays of the many-minded ocean of labour, generally thrown high and dry to begin with, by the inhospitable wave of the Bar—with distinguished professional physicians to give the talk another savour no less pleasant in its way, city-toilers to bring their quota of experience, and rose-buttoned government clerks to give an airy jauntiness to the whole, make up the society which has a distinctive life of its own, and provides busy-hearted London with a second and a winter season, full of welcome associations and attractions which belong to it, rather than to the crush and hurry of the spring and summer. In this society Daisy came to grown-up life, to become at once the first prize in the garden. Her mother was a chronic invalid who lived retired; so she was the pride and charge of various chaperons, but most of the good-natured Mrs. Pepperharrow, who was a general favourite for her known possession of that attribute, and devoted to Daisy. Her husband, Mr. Pepperharrow, was a great success in soap-boiling, and through city matters first had been brought into intimate relations

with the Fairfields, who were near neighbours of his in the house in Portland Place.

Like Scott's imaginary June-rose, Daisy had first "budded fain" in winter's snow, during this preliminary season, with a large and wide-spreading result upon her segment of the circle I have described. The most opposite effects were created in the most opposite minds. The young barrister hitherto devoted to his work grew suddenly neglectful, and appeared at five o'clock teas, a rare and welcome animal, to the delight of the world of womanhood, which at these entertainments is so unfairly in the majority. He shared the masculine honours, probably, with the last and most depressing product of the new civilization, the comic-singer of the drawing-room, who "entertains" in the evening in those epicene public resorts which mainly supply the theatric wants of the large class of people who still look upon theatres as something vaguely wrong, and express approval or emotion in nothing louder than a gentle sibillant sound, as thus—s-s-s. When Lambkin of the Colonial Office first took up this semi-public line, he was much disconcerted by these sounds, which he thought meant hissing. But after a time he found they were simply

what reached his ear of the confidential and admiring criticism of one fair Philistine to her neighbour, and meant—"How s-silly!" Then he was consoled, and persevered in the path of glory. In the afternoon Lambkin was the stay of five o'clock teas, and was never so glad as when he met some wandering solitary male, to whom to confide "what an awful audience" this was.

The idle barrister, meanwhile, took an opposite cause, deserted his usual haunts except in the evening, appeared in court regularly at ten o'clock and in chambers afterwards, and dreamed of some unimagined income to lay at Daisy Fairfield's feet. Her singular charm exercised its power upon nearly all who came across her, and made her a prime favourite with young and old, for of the society of the last she shewed herself provokingly fond. She liked somebody who had done something, she would tell her distracted adorers, and was always ready to throw over the best waltzer among them, if he had nothing better than his youth and his waltzing to boast of, for a chat with some older and more travelled mariner on the seas of time. Something grave and deep looked out of the clear blue eyes, more akin, as by some forecast

of a troubled future, with the trials and struggles of this life of ours, than with its sunnier and more thoughtless day. A deep reader in her quiet hours at home, loving to steep her mind in the thoughts and the wisdom of the wise and thoughtful, she took enjoyments as they came frankly and happily; but even while she seemed most thoroughly a part of the world of mere pleasure, she was yet more deeply a careful watcher of the "divine tragi-comedy" of life. She was so happy and frank withal, however, that she never frightened her young worshippers away—many as may have been the mortal quarrels which rose on her account between Damon and Pythias, or Orestes and Pylades—though she would often find an opportunity, by some quiet word of timely but seemingly careless council, to strengthen some waverer for the world of work, some trifler for the life of earnest. There was no fate for her among them, though; and through the first half-year of her queenly life in her world's eye, she moved like Queen Elizabeth through her own spacious times, in worthy maiden meditation, fancy-free. So her young life passed on through its opening stage, and through the first months of the London season proper, during which she made but

small incursion into the more fashionable regions of society's latitudes and longitudes, until, through the persuasion of some young Oxonian whom she had met and fraternized with at her father's table, she added an Oxford Commemoration to the scene of her growing experience.

Her card was full from a very early date, at that Christchurch ball; but, truth to tell, some of the names that filled it were rather hard to decipher, and occupied some occasional blanks with mysterious pencil-marks of her own. She did not quite know what Oxford might bring forth worth talking to or sitting out with, and wisely reserved herself for emergencies. The scene was very bright and very gay, and Daisy Fairfield was well pleased and happy. She liked her unsophisticated cavaliers thoroughly, had picked up an amazing amount of miscellaneous information on university politics in general, and even mastered something of the secrets of half-fifteen and old Barre, by a careful cross-examination of Tompkins of Trinity between the figures of a quadrille. Never was anybody, some people said, who so much wanted to know everything, or was so nice to tell everything to. The music of Godfrey's "Guards," or "Mabel," whatever

was the tarantula-dance of the day, was just over; and the enraptured Bones had just led his partner to Mrs. Pepperharrow's side. He had -been perplexing himself over the old problem, what was the most delicate form in which to ask a young lady whether she would like anything to drink, when she solved it by saying that she would like to sit down. And just as he was handing her over to her chaperon, who was confiding to Tompkins that she oped the supper would soon begin, he saw an unexpected figure standing quietly at his side. Daisy Fairfield saw it too, and her heart gave the most unwarrantable jump for no reason whatever. She had been speculating on "not P. W.—the other" half the evening, without the least knowing why.

"You here, sir, after all?" said Bones. "Oh, I am glad!" And without further prelude, and with all the confident ingenuousness of youth, he added: "Oh, Miss Fairfield, do let me introduce you to our fellow, Faucit, whom we were talking of this afternoon. Miss Fairfield—Mrs. Pepperharrow—Mr. Faucit. Mrs. Pepperharrow—Miss Fairfield."

"May I have the pleasure of a dance, Miss Fairfield?" said Guy.

How many of the world's lightest or most serious chapters have opened in those familiar words?

"I am afraid that you're rather late in the field, Mr. Faucit," she answered, consulting her card.

The charm of her voice, which was very great, caught Faucit's sensitive ear at once. There are women to whom one can shut one's eyes and listen for the sheer pleasure of sound, half inclined to laugh with the pleasure, without even the need of heeding what it is they say, as one listens to the conversation of a piano under a sympathetic hand. Daisy Fairfield had a voice of this kind, and Faucit felt at once that he was in the presence of a masterpiece, one of those few and far-between women, in whom nothing has been left out, as it were.

"Have I no chance of anything?" he asked. "Not even of an odd quadrille?"

"I am afraid the quadrilles are all— Do you care for a waltz, Mr. Faucit?"

"Very much. But I hardly liked to ask for that."

"I can give you this one, which is just beginning. I think," she added demurely, "that my partner won't come."

"He must be very blind to his own interests,"

said Guy, "if I may judge from seeing you waltz with Bones just now. I am lucky in his mistake." And then, with the long, free, preliminary glide which launches a well-matched pair into one of the greatest of harmless enjoyments, Guy Faucit and Daisy Fairfield made their first step together.

I who chronicle these things, remember well once, when I had worked myself—I was younger than I am now—into a very æsthetic and well-informed phase of mind, having a profound talk with an eminent American blue-stocking in a public room at Newport or at Narragansett, no matter where. We had got into very deep waters indeed, and I was boldly but gravely propounding some astounding theories of biology which had never occurred to me in my life till that moment, much to my companion's edification and approval.

"Now tell me, Mr. Balbus," she said, half-shutting her eyes and throwing back her head, as evidently expecting something from the answer to enlarge her experience, "tell me what you consider the most even sensation of momentary content to which the human soul is capable of rising?"

I reflected for a brief space, and replied—

"I can tell you, Mrs. Pozzy, without hesitation. It is a perfect waltz with a perfect partner, to perfect music, on a perfect floor."

The shock told, for Mrs. Pozzy sat bolt upright and looked at me.

"Do you mean to say, Mr. Balbus, that you waltz?"

"I do indeed; I delight in it."

"Then," she said, with that instant appreciation of a situation given to a quick woman, "let me introduce you to my daughter."

The very next week I was a guest at Mrs. Pozzy's country cottage, and had an elegant time. In the intervals of those ambrosial nights of philosophic disquisition, I found Miss Wilhelmina M. Pozzy a very charming partner.

Guy and Daisy settled down in earnest to their stride. He was a past master in the art, thanks to a perfect development of the time-ear. Tune-ear, oddly enough, he had none, and could never hum "God save the Queen" with a proximate approach to correctness, though he knew what music he liked to hear, and understood it in that sense very well. But the time-ear is a different thing, and made his

appreciation of a false step in a waltz as keen as of a halting verse. The best singer of his day will often be unable to take one turn in the waltz correctly. Guy had perfected his waltzing during a long vacation in the States, where they understand it better than anywhere. He knew the difference between the Portland glide and the Boston dip, and quick or slow, forward or reverse, he steered his deft course through the whirling and converging couples without a bump or a halt, till he could land his partner safely in a quiet corner. He could send her half to sleep in a slow and dreamy measure, or send the young blood coursing through her veins by a swing like a steady racer's.

As for Daisy Fairfield, he found her one of those partners in a thousand, who learn in a moment the sort of dancer they have to deal with—whether they have to nurse him tenderly through the performance, get as little kicked as possible, and do all the steering themselves, or can trust entirely to their cavalier in charge, and give themselves up without afterthought to the pleasure of the whirl. They adapt themselves at once, after the first minute, to the step of their partner, who, on his side, meets them

half-way, and fall into "two step or three" at short notice. Two or three *time* is a misnomer, by the way; for whatever the step, all true waltzing is in three time. Such a heaven-born waltzer as Daisy Fairfield was no weight for Guy Faucit to carry; his arm circled her waist and scarcely felt it, as the lithe and gracious figure sailed on its royal round. They enjoyed their first turn with never a word on either side, and it was a long one, and the breathing of both was but slightly quickened when they stopped.

"You waltz very well, Mr. Faucit," was all she said.

"I need not tell you the same, Miss Fairfield."

After a short pause she smiled.

"Are you ready again?"

"Quite. It's a pity to lose any of it."

To do them justice, they lost very little.

To how many couples of the modern day, I wonder, has their first waltz been their opening adventure, their first dallying with the fruits of fairyland? It is on that ground, I suppose, that some good people still object to it, and that its original sin at first raised a decorous outcry even from such a pattern of propriety as Lord Byron. Why that should be I know not. The roads

to that fairyland are many, and it is a country none the worse for the opening up of such a poetic way as this. But a way it is, past denial. To awkward dancers the waltz is a very ordeal, a gymnastic exercise of a trying and often painful kind. But it is a magic key for others, which opens out a vista of possible sympathies. Between two kindred natures, it is apt to establish at once an electric communication. Why not? Are all possible magnetisms wrong? As I once heard a hardworking clergyman say, in a capital speech on the supposed wickedness of going to the theatre, "Is a young man or woman to be ticketed for the journey of life like a package, and labelled, 'this side up, with care'?" Faith, such a package is apt to be compact of very brittle glass indeed.

The waltz was over and the music ceased. A few quiet words of commonplace were all that then passed between the two, as they wandered up and down the rooms.

"The supper-rooms will be open directly, Miss Fairfield; so I suppose you will not care for a cup of tea now?"

"Not now, thank you. Is your crew likely to win at Henley?"

"I hope so; but I don't feel sure. The Cambridge boat is very strong. You saw us this afternoon, then?"

"Oh yes; and you were pointed out to me on the bank as a sure guide to victory. Both Mr. Bones and Mr. Tompkins, who were with me, seemed to look upon defeat under your banners as impossible."

Guy laughed.

"There are no such believers as young believers, Miss Fairfield; and it is something to have established a name. But I don't think the Trinity men will run away from mine, for all that. Is there any chance of your being at Henley, and seeing the result?"

"I expect so. This is only my first season, Mr. Faucit, and, as you see, I am being taken to everything. A boat-race will be new to me, and from what I saw to-day, it must be wonderfully exciting. I suppose that to rowing men it is something glorious, very different from—a waltz." A very slight hesitation here.

"Different certainly," he answered, "but not better in its way; at least not always." Daisy inhaled a long sweet breath from the flowers she carried. Guy was one of those partners with whom it is not necessary

to set them down. "The great charm of life, I think," he went on, "lies in its infinite variety."

"So I think too," she answered, "woman as I am. I wonder if we shall think so as we grow older."

"I expect so, if we go the right way to work. Did you ever hear of a saying of Count Cavour's, Miss Fairfield, that to a sensible man two things should be impossible—rancour and boredom?"

"I never heard it. It sounds very good and very true. Where did you pick it up?"

"In a memoir I have just been reading of him. A very great and interesting life, over, one would think, just at the wrong time. I wonder what such deaths mean. But I ought to beg your pardon for bringing such matters into a ball-room, just after a first waltz!"

"Why? Are you one of the men who always think it necessary to apologise to a partner for supposing that she can care about anything but the musical glasses?"

"If you say that," he answered, "I shall have to beg pardon again. But perhaps I am the sinner, for really I can think of very little except that waltz of ours. I wonder if I have any chance of another."

"Well, I'll see."

They were close to Mrs. Pepperharrow as Daisy examined her card. That lady was just leaving her seat on the arm of a dignitary who had taken possession of her, and left the emancipated Tompkins free to devote himself to a young person in a white frock with red ribbons, of the primitive order of youthful English millinery. But she looked happy and amused enough to wear anything.

"Daisy dear," said Mrs. Pepperharrow, "I'm going to ave something to eat. The supper-rooms are open, and Dr. Parley has been kind enough to ask me. Won't you ave something too?"

"May I take you in to supper, Miss Fairfield?" said Guy.

A young and beaming undergraduate was making his way towards Daisy as the first bars of the "Lancers" struck up.

"Well, I shouldn't be sorry. And—a little of these very young men does go a long way." Daisy was a full year younger than the object of her description. "Oh, Mr. Billington," she said, "I feel very much ashamed of myself; but will you excuse me for this dance? I have been dancing every round dance on the

card, and want to go in to supper. I will find something later for you if I can."

Billington of Brasenose submitted with the best grace he could, and Guy and Daisy went in to supper. Before they had well begun it they had fallen into talk on men and books, which pleased and interested them both, and long after they had finished they lingered on over the little table at which they were seated together, all unconscious of the sunward flight of time.

CHAPTER IV.

HERCULES AND OMPHALE.

It was full and brilliant morning when the last guests at the Christchurch ball left the lights and the garlands behind them, after the last visit to the tables, which makes so pleasant a parting for the couples who have been partnered in the closing galop.

With all her enjoyment of life, Daisy Fairfield was a girl who took her pleasures soberly enough, and, finding plenty for her hand to do wherever she went, was little given to staying out any ball whatever. At the Masonic festivity the night before, Bones and Tompkins had exerted all their fascinations in vain to win her to their wishes in that respect, and had appealed to Mrs. Pepperharrow to no purpose, Daisy laughingly representing her as the flinty-hearted chaperon who was not to be trifled with.

The soap-boiler's lady was indeed ideally qualified for her post; for, like the Duke of Wellington and others of the truly great, she could sleep how she liked and when she liked, and yet be ready for instant action if called upon, at any moment. She had attained to a perfection in the art almost equal to that of a celebrated advocate of late days, who, having only four hours of bed out of the twenty-four, always went placidly to sleep while the opposing counsel was demolishing his arguments, no matter at what length or with what natural aggravation of his ferocity, and then, waking directly the voice ceased, softly demolished *him*. Mrs. Pepperharrow, too, was ready to undertake unlimited journeys to the supper-room to pass the time, was so good-naturedly responsive in talk that she found plenty of elders willing to talk with her, and took a genuine pleasure in watching the enjoyments of the young people, particularly her favourite Daisy. She would stand to her post till five o'clock in the morning if Daisy wished; but quite as readily accepted the responsibility of taking her home early on receipt of the word of command. So she assured Bones and Tompkins that Daisy and she had had enough of it, and that Bones and Tompkins, whose

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frank and cordial young ways had quite won her accessible heart, must remember that she was not as young as she had been. In vain Bones assured her that he didn't believe a word of it, and Tompkins broke down in unformed compliments about her beauty-sleep. The young inseparables had to escort the two ladies to their carriage, and then to console themselves with the champagne and plover's eggs.

At the Christchurch ball, however, Daisy's rule was broken through. I should be afraid to say how many dances after that supper she and Guy danced together. She was always superior to prejudice where she liked a partner, and not afraid of being told that she had exceeded the proper amount of dances with him.

As for Mrs. Pepperharrow, her confidence in Daisy was so entire, that she would as soon have questioned her dear 'usband Ugh's knowledge of soaps.

Daisy Fairfield wrote down Faucit's name in so many of those blanks, and for so many "extras," that something which was half a smile and half a blush came over the fair face, when she conned over her card with herself on waking in her lodgings in "the High" after her sleep that morning.

Some few hours earlier than she, for he had braced

himself for his day's work while the Daisy's petals were still fast closed, Guy Faucit was making a similar study in the Balliol rooms.

"What a pretty woman," he thought to himself, "and how full of life and of interest in everything. How lovely she looked in the morning light, which seres and yellows nine-tenths of humanity after a dose of the gas-fumes. With that daring but perfect violet broidery of leaves which wreathed her rich white dress from the head to the foot, and made her look like a sylvan goddess, she might have brought old Apelles out of his grave. Gad! if he could have painted that superb throat of hers, set on her shoulders like a bit of marble of Paros!"

Something like these were the meditations of Guy Faucit at his dressing-table; and it must be remembered in his excuse that Guy Faucit was a classical scholar and a poet. He rolled about in his big bath that morning with an extra zest, and whistled to himself during the drying process as if he were grooming a horse, and had a vague and general sense of lightness of heart which was pleasant to his soul. He paused for a long time between two buttons, recalling with considerable accuracy the tones of the

last cordial good night and the pressure of the warm hand, just marked enough to indicate the success of the evening, which had passed as he put Daisy into the carriage.

"By Jove, what a voice!" he said aloud, and with convinced emphasis, finishing off the suspended button.

The even tenour of Faucit's collegiate way had been suddenly and abruptly broken, though he was not of the kind to admit or to know it yet. His breakfast cleared away, he never did a better spell of work than he did that morning.

There was a flower-show in the afternoon in the gardens of Worcester College, once fabled to be so remote from the centre of Oxford civilization as to require a cab-journey to find it. Then the university poet sang of the men who

Τηλεπόρω ναίουσ' ἐνι 'Υστέρῳ, τηλόθι πάτρης:

and another young academic bard, in one of the funniest parodies ever written, "Augustus Smalls of Boniface," discoursed of the classic Balliol—

—whose third floor men descry,
The distant heights of Worcester
Fringing the western sky.

But the broad and fine street which runs by the Taylor

Buildings has dissipated the clouds of distance, and the access to the Worcester festival was easy enough when Daisy and Guy met again among the pleasant glades of the college-garden, and listened to the spirited music of the military band, reproducing in an echo, perhaps, some of the dances of the night, and making them shut their eyes and fancy themselves waltzing again. It is a wonderfully pleasant chapter in young lives, that first morning-meeting after the first ball, where the interest has been mutually aroused and the sympathy pleasantly kindled. It was with a sort of freemasonry that our hero and heroine—pass me the good old-fashioned words, my reader—welcomed each other in the garden.

"Shall you be at the Worcester flower-show to-morrow?" Guy had said the very last thing; and Daisy had notified that she should, though it was not till they had reached home that Mrs. Pepperharrow received any intimation of the plan.

"But, my dear, I thought you said—"

"Never mind what I said, there's a darling. I had no idea how pleasant the flower-show was likely to be till they told me."

"They" remained comfortably in the vague; but

good Mrs. Pepperharrow asked no questions and suggested no difficulties, and was quite content to fall in with Daisy's change of mind.

They had been sitting in the gardens for some little time, attended by some of the faithful henchmen who were enrolled in their service for the week, before Guy's tall figure made its appearance among the trees. Daisy's eyes had made more than one rapid little reconnoitre all round her during the intervals of talk and music, and contracted, perhaps, just a shade of impatience and uncertainty, when her quick glance detected it coming. She saw Guy in a moment, and saw too, in another moment, that he on his side had seen her, and was making his way towards her group with that studied air of indifference and accident which is invariably worn on such occasions, and suggests so strongly either the primitive deceit of man's heart, or the debasing effects of a hypocritical civilization. He shook hands with one friend, nodded to another, accounted for his presence at the flower-show by the state of the weather, the attractions of scientific horticulture (he didn't know a rose from an oak, except by right of his instinctive love of Nature), an "off-day" with the crew, in fact, upon various mutually destructive

pleas. He was the most truthful of mankind, and told as many falsehoods before he reached Daisy's side as it cost him minutes to get there. If love laughs at the perjuries of lovers to each other, he must find in their little fibs to third persons a perfect storehouse of fun. As for Daisy, she felt most becomingly and unreasonably pleased, and even then was half inclined to take herself to task for feeling so. But the truth is that, before Guy's appearance at the ball,—where she had, on the strength of that one look upon the river-bank, vaguely expected to see him until she gave it up as too late,—she had extracted from the innocent and willing Bones a few leading and interesting particulars about "Faucit the other." Faucit Telamon, Gosling called him, in distinction from P. W., who figured in his dictionary as Faucit Oileus, or the oily one. Gosling's acquaintance with Daisy Fairfield, however, was to be a thing of later date than Oxford days. Though he was a Balliol man, and proud of his coxship, most of his mates and pleasures were to be found at Christchurch, which was the foster-mother of most of the Gosling family, and numbered his elder brother, the Viscount Gander, among her nurselings at the time. Jemmy was indeed sent to Balliol to keep him out of

his elder's heir-apparentish influence, and out of respect to a family tradition, which credited him with comparative brains. His successful matriculation at Balliol was long remembered in the records of the race, and justly set off against the various "ploughs" which rather roughed his subsequent career, till the heroic efforts of Faucit, who took a fancy to the boy, "pulled him through" the last struggle, and entitled him to all the honours of B.Adom.

But the Honourable Jem has landed us in a digression. We are indebted for it to Bones, who bore to Gosling the astonishing generic likeness which characterizes a certain class of ingenuous youth, and sets an apparent limit even on the creative powers of Nature. It is as if she had to turn out a certain number of industrial products every year, and, having to break her best dies when once used for moulding, keeps her common ones constantly at hand. Bones described Faucit to Daisy just as Gosling would have done it, with the same enthusiasm and in the same vernacular, which is more descriptive than eloquence. How completely Faucit had taken his beloved college to wife, with her laurels for a dowry, and was certain to be master of Balliol some day or another; how

he had once proposed to read for the bar, but had been persuaded by the other dons to stick to his Oxford work, where he was the means of colonizing half the university with fellows from Balliol, and keeping her glories fresh in the schools and on the river; how he managed the college as he liked with that strong will of his, and had done so in his undergraduate days, when he was an autocrat at the college-meetings; how vainly, when the sceptre left his hand, that ass Spooner and others had fought for it, with results approaching to intestine anarchy; how devoted he was to his old mother, who had a small income of her own, but was indebted to Guy's work for her home and most of her comforts; how impervious he was to feminine attractions, though all women liked him for his nice and pleasant manners with them; and how the universal tongue of rumour wagged at him for a bachelor foredoomed;—all these particulars and more, with a sort of "He's a jolly good fellow" refrain pervading his ditty, did Bones of Balliol confide in choice recitative to Daisy Fairfield's ear. As became his age, he was quite unsuspecting, and attributed entirely to his own eloquence the welcome apparition of Guy Faucit at the ball. Well-pleased was he that Daisy should, as he

expressed it to his familiars, "cotton right off" to his favourite hero; and when, after they had gone in to supper together, he came to claim his dance and saw them deeply engaged in each other's talk, he retired with a discretion beyond his years, and apologized to Daisy for his desertion afterwards on the transparent ground that he could not find her, lest she should be disturbed in mind at his neglect. With the prologue supplied thus liberally by Bones, Daisy, at the end of the Christchurch ball, knew a great deal of Faucit's story and character, and was free to weave herself some pleasant fancies in guessing at more.

There was no disenchantment on either side in the Worcester Gardens, as there sometimes is in these episodes of ball-room romance. For in truth here was a pair ideally fitted, in all the circumstance of glorious youth, of kindred tastes and sympathies, and of outward semblance, to repeat the time-honoured process of falling in love.

"You at a flower-show, Mr. Faucit, as well as at a ball!" said Daisy, when he had installed himself at her side after the first smiling welcome. "I shall begin to disbelieve altogether the stories I have heard of your severe life."

"I don't think there is much severity about it, Miss Fairfield," he answered. "Perhaps it's because I'm so fond of pleasure that I don't look for it at places where I don't enjoy myself. That sounds more like being selfish than severe, doesn't it?"

"How lucky you are in being able to take your pleasures as you like them. A woman's are all mapped out for her, and some of the maps are very badly done. But I think we have an advantage over you. We don't always want to be 'doing,' as the stronger among you do. We can shut our eyes and enjoy such a summer day as this, with the flowers and the music, without very much asking why."

"And do you think I can't?" said Faucit. "I think if I might light a pipe under the trees here, put on my oldest shooting-coat, and look at all the pretty women without being asked to talk, I could like a flower-show as well as anybody. It is because we always *are* expected to do something in places where there's absolutely nothing to be done, that I don't profess much love for this sort of thing."

"Well, you needn't talk to me if you don't wish."

"That's another thing."

"Is it?" she said, innocently. "Why? As far as

I am concerned, if you won't be alarmed at the confession, I would even permit the pipe."

"Miss Fairfield! you don't know what you're saying. The idea of a don smoking in a college garden! Why, we should have half the undergraduates taking fire, and doing the same."

"And why shouldn't they?"

"I can't imagine."

They laughed pleasantly together. They felt amazingly content with the world and with themselves, and were in the mood to laugh at very little.

"Nothing is so terrible to humanity, Mr. Faucit, as a vague fear of consequence. If all the undergraduates smoked, what would happen?"

"Judging from the effect upon myself, there would be much less noise. But the result of such a crime would be something like that of being named in the House of Commons—known only to Providence.-Mrs. Pepperharrow, what is your opinion of tobacco-smoking?"

History must not fail to record the material fact, that Faucit had been duly presented at the ball to Daisy's guardian, and had impressed her very favourably. She was no doubt apt to be favourably

impressed, but on this occasion the impression was more marked than usual. Perhaps there may have been some expenditure of pains on Faucit's part in producing the result. He was not a man who often failed to please, when he wished it and tried.

"He is a most remarkable young man, my dear," she had said to Daisy when they were going to bed: "quite what one has the right to expect in these alls of learning. It's rather awful to think of what e'll know if he lives to be seventy. But then I suppose he won't. I've heard these scholars always wear themselves out young."

"I hope he won't do that, dear Mrs. Pepperharrow," Daisy had answered. "I don't think he looks much like it at present."

"No; but it's deceptive. Heart disease always makes a man look big, like my poor dear husband. Then, to be sure, Ugh does eat a good deal; so it may keep is strength up."

Mrs. Pepperharrow was well content to let Guy and Daisy talk and improve acquaintance at her side without interfering in the dialogue. Happy and many-coloured groups passed and repassed them, with the lazy interchange of looks and comments of those who

come to see and be seen. Personally appealed to on the merits of tobacco, Mrs. Pepperharrow had her opinions ready for active service.

"I think it's a nasty abit myself, Mr. Faucit," she said, "and I wonder at the young men liking it as they do. The way it makes curtains smell is sometimes very bad. I ave never felt so sorry as I ought for their cutting off poor Sir Walter Raleigh's head; though indeed as he invented potatoes as well as tobacco there's a good deal to be said for him."

"Oh, Mrs. Pepperharrow, what an idea! Will you take us through the tents, Mr. Faucit? I haven't visited the show proper as yet."

"Certainly," answered the Oxonian. "It's always the thing to be done at these places. Walk in at one end of an intolerably stuffy tent, with a last lingering look at the fresh air outside; pretend to admire Prize 1 and Prize 2 in flowers and fruit, which look like unhealthy specimens of their race, with livers artificially enlarged like Strasburg geese; speculate why Prize 2 didn't get Prize 1, to argue knowledge; 'melt at a peach, and rapture at a rose;' and so out again at the other end, followed by the next batch, like the visitors in the Tower of London. I warn you that

I know absolutely nothing of flowers, Miss Fairfield, and that I shall be delighted to escort you."

"If you discourse in that way, Mr. Faucit," answered Daisy, "it will be better than several lectures on botany. The proper study of mankind is man, and we can consider him in relation to flowers."

"So clever of you to talk like that," sighed Mrs. Pepperharrow, as the three entered bravely on the ordeal of the tent together.

The appearance of her friend Dr. Parley, who was a man compact of science, and his ready offer to guide her through the maze, came opportunely enough to leave the young couple to their own devices, to wander on their way upon the path of flowers. The doctor was a floral enthusiast, and expatiated to Mrs. Pepperharrow upon the forms of development before them, in good Latin words as long as Jem Gosling's historic stumbling-blocks, listened to with admiring reverence, which culminated at the end in "So clever of you to talk like that. I am sure I shall understand the Latin language better than I ever did before. I ad no idea that the Latins had so many flowers in their time."

Guy and Daisy, meanwhile, looked at the flowers or passed them over in a very hap-hazard way, neither

of them affecting an interest they did not feel, but finding more and more how many subjects of talk they had in common. To their fresh-air natures, the poor imprisoned plants had something of the effect that the hapless eagles in the Zoological Gardens have upon the observer's mind in certain moods, producing a longing to unbar the cell and let them out, under the influence of the look of "heimweh" in their dulled eyes, turned upon the free sky spread so temptingly over them. The show flowers in tents are always dreadful, flower-shows having long been what everything is now-a-days, mere social pretexts—pretexts for things good enough in their way, but apt to divert and to spoil a good many healthy interests.

To the genuine cricket-mind, for instance, the Eton and Harrow match of the day is but a sorry substitute for the old fights of the public-school week, which meant cricket and business, instead of fashion and champagne. In the middle of carriages six feet deep, and the small fire of remarks about anything but cricket, innocent of the difference between point and long-stop, and showing no personal interest in either side, the mind reverts regretfully to the days of the 'chaffing-gallery,' and enthusiastic sisters who knew

as much about cricket as the boys. It is a pretty show, now: but one of many.

Flower-shows, however, were always privileged follies, and the exhibitions at Oxford were a degree more depressing, from the floral point of view, than their neighbours. Except by the hideous tradition of the Temple chrysanthemums, which coincides with such satiric mockery with the opening of the legal year, and the condemnation of unlucky suitors to a course of Westminster air, they have not been often matched in that way. Little enough of their influence, however, seemed to fall dispiritingly upon Daisy and Guy.

"Would you really like to see my rooms?" he was asking her when they came out of the tent, where, notwithstanding his description of it, they had been going the rounds for an unconscionable time.

"I should indeed, and very much. The undergraduates have been very pleasant and hospitable to us; but, except Mrs. Pepperharrow's friend, Dr. Parley, we have seen nothing of the inner life of a don. You have no idea what dangerous theories I might have formed of the class if I had not met you. I shall never allow now that a don can't dance."

"I wish that I had had the chance of meeting

you at the Masonic ball. But, at all events, I must try to disperse your dangerous theories as much as I can, for the credit of my race. Do you go back to town the day after to-morrow?"

"Yes, in the morning."

"Are you engaged all to-morrow?"

"Only to the concert in the evening, and at the theatre in the morning, you know."

"Oh, yes, the event of the Commemoration, where you will see the degrees given, and hear the undergraduates in their glory. I wonder what sort of theories you will form of that part of our community upon the occasion. Can't you come to luncheon with me afterwards? I think I can promise a don or two whom you will really like to meet."

"I'm sure I shall. But I must ask Mrs. Pepperharrow.—Mrs. Pepperharrow, Mr. Faucit has kindly asked us to have luncheon at his rooms to-morrow, after the theatre."

"Where, if you will allow me, Mrs. Pepperharrow," said Guy, "I shall be able to point you out all the celebrities, and translate some of the Latin."

"So kind of you, Mr. Faucit," answered the worthy lady, resuming her charge. "I've been earing a

great deal of Latin in the tents, and perhaps I shall know some of it again. But we shall be giving you a great deal of trouble in coming to luncheon."

"None at all. Our bachelor rooms have such a treat so seldom, that it does them real good. Will you come?"

The chaperon agreed without further pressing, and the arrangement was made. They came out of the gates of Worcester together, and Guy Faucit took his leave, bent upon his duties to the Balliol crew. Daisy Fairfield had seldom looked prettier than she did at the rather formal dinner which Dr. Parley gave that night; but, from what cause deponent sayeth not, she had been seldom more silent or more abstracted.

CHAPTER V.

OXONIANA.

The proceedings in the Oxford theatre, supposed to be the central fact of the Commemoration week, impressed Daisy Fairfield with an unfeigned and ill-pleased wonder, and supplied her with the materials for a searching cross-examination of Faucit, who had stationed himself at her elbow, which he found very difficult of answer. Why, on this of all days in the year, the dignified university should turn itself into a common bear-garden, allow its own elected officers to be officially pilloried by the universal hiss of public scorn, for nothing particular except doing what they were appointed to do; * specially invite famous authors, famous soldiers, famous statesmen and diplomatists, to receive their

* I am delighted to hope that this is a thing of the past; and to see that the Vice-Chancellor of the day feels as if the undergraduates were "his own children."

honours in an inexplicable dumb-show and noise, and to hear there the names of favourite heroes and leaders, perhaps, proposed for general execration; expose ladies and young girls to a fire of very impertinent and unseemly banter, and in more than one instance to considerable fright;—and all this for the behoof of a gang of juvenile rowdies, resembling a boxing-night sixpenny gallery in everything but the wit and the musical ear—will perhaps puzzle the future historian of English manners as much as it puzzled Daisy Fairfield. That young lady detected the beaming countenance of Bones in the front row of the rioters, evidently in a state of profound satisfaction with himself and the whole scene, and gravely ignored the condescending efforts which he was making to attract her notice. She "had it out with him" afterwards, as he expressed himself, in a manner which "made a man feel himself quite small, you know."

"Three cheers for the ladies in dark-blue" was the cry most in favour in that day's gallery, led by choragus Bones, and suggested to his original mind by the rich deep-hued dress which Daisy wore in honour of her hostess-city, with a soft lace ruff for boundary-line to unite it with the graceful throat. She felt

anything but comfortable under the salutation, which she quite understood to be intended mainly for her, as representative of the class apostrophized, and shrank into her shell as much as she could.

"Oh, Mr. Faucit, how very rude and noisy! I shall be glad to get away."

"It's abominable," answered Faucit, thoroughly vexed. "I can't think why on earth this sort of thing isn't put a stop to. It goes from bad to worse every year, and will end in putting a stop to Commemoration altogether."

"If they said any single thing worth hearing, or that one could laugh at," she said, "one wouldn't so much mind. But they're dull enough to be respectable!" And a discordant, many-throated howl went up, as a figure in cap and gown came into the hall.

"Yah! yah! yah!" like the shouts of some fictitious semi-human breed in a fancy of Dean Swift's.

"Who's that unhappy man, and what has he done?"

"That's the proctor; and he is a very good fellow, who has done no harm to anybody."

"Oh, P. W.?"

"No, that was last year. Who on earth told you about P. W.?"

"Mr. Bones, who is actively engaged in denouncing P. W.'s successor, and trying to catch my eye, which is not to be caught."

"The young scamp," said Guy; "he's there, is he? I'll give him a talking to afterwards."

"Oh, don't say I told you. And I suppose one oughtn't to mind; youth will have its fling," added this experienced worldling.

"It needn't have its fling at other people."

Suddenly the howls swelled and gathered into one stupendous yell.

"Yah! yah! yah! Take it off! take it off!"

"Good gracious, what is it now?"

"Vir doctissime et reverendissime."

"Who's that?"

"That's the public orator reading something in Latin."

"Yah! yah! yah! The man in the straw hat!"

"Yah! yah! yah! Take it off! take it off!"

"Three cheers for the ladies in dark blue! Hip!" But the diversion was vain, and succeeded no further than the first hip.

"Yah! the straw hat! Take it off! turn him out!"

The storm gathered and arose; proctors and unpopular statesmen were forgotten; the ladies in blue and in green were set aside; the face of the public orator grew impatient and disgusted; a distinguished foreign ambassador who had come to be honoured looked about him in blank and undisguised amazement; the men of the Faucit type felt and showed themselves thoroughly ashamed, and even the Boneses in the gallery began to wish themselves away, while the majority of its tenants felt themselves more and more the heroes of the hour, and the guardians of public decency and refinement. Many of the ladies looked towards the door and meditated on the chances of retreat, while Daisy's face flushed with disgust and anger.

"Dear me, Mr. Faucit!" said Mrs. Pepperharrow. "What are they a-goin' to do?"

The poor lady fairly relapsed into a more primitive stage than usual of her early English.

"Nothing, Mrs. Pepperharrow," said Guy, reassuringly. "It will be over directly."

But the yahs arose. The solitary offender in the straw hat, a well-bred and distinguished man of letters who lived in retirement, and innocent of Oxford's

jealousy for good manners was there by invitation, was for a long time placidly unconscious of the cause of the uproar. As it began to dawn on him, he frowned and took root, and looked thoroughly determined and resentful. But modesty and indignation mastered him as he became the mark of all eyes, friendly and unfriendly, and at last he beat a sudden retreat into the street, whence he went straight to the station, and back to his home, to be a foe to university education ever after, and briefly to describe the youth of Oxford as "Brutes." There he did them wrong; but they were queer cattle once a year, in my time.

A shout of triumph from the gallery followed the fugitive; and proudly conscious of having vindicated the laws of breeding, the undergraduates, with trencher caps in different degrees of dilapidation and unsightliness, graciously permitted the proceedings to advance to something like an intelligible close. The public orator's well-turned attempts to frame the most modern English sentiments in classic Latin were favourably, if rather satirically, received; and the sonorous couplets of the bard of Newdigate were hailed with an amount of encouraging applause, due perhaps as much to the re-appearance of the English tongue on the scene, as to

the sentiments expressed. The general sense of relief experienced at this crisis, even by the most accomplished classic present, is apt to invest poetry of the Newdigate type with a halo not its own. An imposing figure was Pope-Scott of Christchurch in the rostrum that day, as he declaimed the peroration of his work in decasyllabics of a faultless cæsura :—

> "Majestic centre of enfranchised art,
> Do in the wondering world thy glorious part!
> For ever and for ever, though to-day
> Man's short-lived fabrics melt for aye away;—
> Though not to us be given the power to mould
> The godlike forms and harmonies of old;
> Not ours the skill to bid the marbles don
> The grace which erst the Parthenon put on,
> And shape Athenæ's arches as they rise,
> Broad-based on careless Genius, to the skies;
> Not ours with master-hand and eye to trace
> The bold proportions of the stone-girt space
> Which mighty Cæsar's giant * walls embrace;
> Though the deft voice of fair Pentelicus
> Be in her sweeter secrets mute for us;
> Though lost the painter's and the sculptor's lore,
> Yet still for ever (as I said before),
> Thy name, fair city of the violet crown,
> Shall travel on the wings of Memory down,
> And live embalmed, until the death of Time,
> Linked with all virtues, and a single crime."

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* *sic* in MS.

"Hear! hear!" and "Go it, Homer!" from the gallery; and "Where did you get that last line from?" from some freshman more audacious than the rest, who was promptly snubbed and bonneted by his neighbours. There was a well-pleased smile on the faces of the groundlings, and as Pope-Scott bowed and withdrew, to be escorted home with the honours by admiring Christchurch friends, the select audience of the somewhat mixed entertainment dispersed and melted away.

"I certainly have heard something very like the last line before," said Daisy.

"Pardon me," answered Guy, as he strolled with her along Broad Street towards his rooms. "Byron expressed an exactly opposite sentiment; and boldly to improve by adaptation is one of the greatest arts of poetry. Like his predecessor Goldsmith, Pope-Scott touches nothing which he feels he does not adorn."

"Yes; but what does he mean by the single crime?"

"I can't imagine, and you shouldn't ask. Mystery is the soul of peroration."

"Well, it was a good young poem, well delivered. What city did he say it was about?"

"Athens. I believe that the closing lines are modified from one which he wrote last year on Rome, when he ran second. You may infer it from the reference to Cæsar's walls, obviously left by an oversight on the part of the poet and the examiners. What part of the poem did you like best?"

"The touch of nature implied in the simple expression, 'As I said before.' It went straight to the heart."

Daisy's face was rippling with little smiles as the two indulged in these grave comments.

"You are quite a critic," said the other as gravely, "and have every qualification to call yourself 'we.' Yes; you are right. Artistic Bathos is an essential in a Newdigate poem, and is in this instance handled with a master-touch. Pope-Scott has written many lines which should live by his use of it. In a prize poem of his at Cheltenham, upon a distinguished Irish soldier (Pope-Scott is, I believe, a native of that imaginative country), occurs this celebrated couplet, the climax of a fervid description of the hero's honours—

'He on the Curragh, so report prevails,
Has stood parade-ground with the Prince of Wales.'"

Daisy broke into a happy and delighted laugh, and fairly clapped her hands. "Oh, what a delicious poet! Why haven't I met him?"

"It might have been too much for you. To go back into the prosaic world of London, after such a glimpse of the Muses as a poet's society would have given you, would have been too much of a disenchantment. I hope his pentameters will leave a pleasanter recollection than the howls in the gallery."

"I didn't like that. Why do you dons permit it?"

"We shan't for long, I hope. But nothing in England is so dangerous an enemy as a vested interest, however odious to everybody. This has been a sort of Guy Fawkes day with undergraduates from time immemorial, to let the steam off."

"I should make them consume their own steam, by act of convocation."

"I don't know. Boys will be boys."

"Then why do they call themselves men?"

"Your logic, Miss Fairfield," said Guy, "is becoming hard to argue with. Luckily for me, here we are at the foot of my staircase. Will you come up?"

Daisy Fairfield and Mrs. Pepperharrow were soon installed in the comfortable rooms on the first floor,

overlooking the green inner quadrangle of the college of the first Balliol and Devorguilla his wife, and the enclosure of their next neighbour Trinity beyond, divided by the party-wall over which adventurous but gated spirits in the two colleges had once established a mutual right of way. The imprisoned Balliol man would make his escape, by means of climbing this wall, through the gate of Trinity; while his Trinity brother could as conveniently reverse the process, raising no suspicion in the minds of the deceived college-porters. Tompkins and Bones had pursued the unhallowed sport for some time; and it was while they were taking their walks abroad together, both under sentence of gates, under this convenient *ad eundem* arrangement, that they had fallen into the hands of P. W., who had been the author of the conviction. This discovery leading to inquiry, the illegal traffic was exposed and suppressed. Hence much of the Homeric wrath which burned in the bosoms of Tompkins and Bones, who had both suffered from a brief rustication in consequence.

Quietly enough the old quadrangle slept in the sunlight that day, as the little party went through. A few undergraduates were scattered about it, a knot of them engaged in a game of bowls upon the smooth

stretch of turf—for in those days lawn-tennis had not descended, like the Colorado beetle, upon all the green spots of English earth. The college-scouts, a worthy race of men apart, who seem to have brought into their line of life a distinct academic flavour, and look as if they had a second-hand acquaintance with Plato and Aristotle, were carrying their masters' luncheons to their respective rooms, under those flat-topped covers which are as peculiar to the soil as the mortar-board caps; and the whole scene, even though the unusual presence of more than one bonny lass enlivened it to-day, had that strange out-of-the-world flavour which belongs to the enclosures of colleges, and perhaps to no other place, not monastic, since the Thames embankment edged itself in between the Temple and the river.

In old days, when the hum of work was hushed, and the resident Templars were wandering back to chambers from their clubs and coffee-houses, the same feeling was yet more strongly in the air over the green gardens, water-lapped, which stretched at the foot of Paper Buildings and of Garden Court.

A small party of men were soon assembled in honour of Faucit's two visitors. They were men well chosen, whose talk gave Daisy genuine pleasure, and a

glimpse into the more ardent spirit of earnest university life. They were old pupils of Faucit, or men of his standing; and it was clear that among them Faucit was an acknowledged leader, which gave the young lady secret satisfaction. For they were all well worth listening to, had conquered their fellowships in various colleges of Oxford, and talked and thought in a style very different from good old Dr. Parley's friends and guests. All were impregnated with the young reforming spirit which was springing up everywhere—treated Oxford politics as part of the scheme of the world outside rather than narrowed them in any academic sense, and on some matters, perhaps, were apt to speculate more freely and openly than University traditions might be supposed to sanction. But there was nothing said to shock Daisy, though a little to open her eyes; and indeed Faucit himself, though as broad in his churchmanship as in other matters, never cared to encourage some lines of thought in his company. He was known to have commended Gosling's primitive views on theology, rather than those of more enquiring minds.

"I am told," that youth had said, "that Science and the Pentateuch don't hit it off. But I don't interfere

with that myself, and leave them to settle it between themselves."

Daisy's own love of reading delighted her with Faucit's library; and Elia the gentle, and Landor the poetic, gave a pleasant conversational sauce to the dainties on the table. Then an inspection of the pictures led to a welcome interchange of art-talk, in which attractive field of discussion most of the men were more or less at home. Daisy herself was deeply imbued with the genuine love of picture-lore, which is a part of the furniture of all imaginative minds, though her travels in picture-land abroad were so far bounded by the Louvre and Dresden, where she had spent some weeks the summer before, while still in her chrysalis condition.

"No bad beginning, Miss Fairfield," said Guy; "and no bad beginning and end either, if one wants a deep draught of one spring. I have seen my galleries pretty thoroughly, and that San Sisto picture has no rival for me anywhere."

"I cannot fancy it surpassed, Mr. Faucit," she said. "I used to go to the gallery morning after morning; and tempting as my Battonis and Correggios were, I couldn't help spending half my time upon one of the settees before it, all alone in its grandeur, and worship-

ping like a votary. It was more worship than anything else."

"You were not far wrong there. I never can forgive the Dresdeners for giving those Holbeins a similar post of honour. They are no more to be compared to it than a batch of sign-boards, clever as they are."

"Those eternal copyists are still harder to forgive, I think; preventing you from getting a proper view of the pictures, and, in spite of yourself, attracting your eyes from the originals to those dreadful daubs of theirs, though I dare say they are very good in their way. This engraving of yours is a wonderfully fine one. Is there any picture in the world, but that, with that wonder in the eyes?"

"Only one that I know—the Foligno Madonna at the Vatican. And there one misses the child, whose look is more startling than the mother's. The mother looks as if she were afraid of the child, with all her tenderness towards it; but the child looks as if he were fearful of himself, and the strange child-knowledge he must have had of what he was."

"Yes; it is a glorious picture. I should like to see the Foligno."

"Rome is a treasure-house to come; but to me that is its best treasure. I never can care, in comparison, for the more famous 'Annunciation' in the same room with it. It is noble and beautiful enough; but that incredible divinity lives, to me, in those two other Raphaels alone. By right of those two pictures, Raphael has it all his own way, to my mind, as much as Shakespeare among the playwrights."

"Yes; but still I love my Titian."

"Ah, so do I. And when you meet him at Venice you'll love him more."

The art-talk ran pleasantly on, transporting the talkers to many lands in turn, as better than any talk it can. The beggars of Murillo and the cavaliers of Velasquez introduced them to the *patois* of Seville, and the rich art-beauties of the empress of cathedrals, with the cabinet studies of nature, which may be seen in the bright-coloured streets through any of her half-opened doors. Then, by a natural transition, the stately fane of Toledo, with the surroundings of that half-dead and depopulated city of the past, and the grim solitude of the chill Escurial church, fit nurse for Philip's bigotry of blood-thirstiness, were discussed by travellers who had had eyes to see, and kindled a

longing for wider-wanderings in Daisy Fairfield's receptive mind.

Guy Faucit, perhaps, thought how pleasant it would be to be her guide among all these wonders, afloat in a Venetian gondola, or afield in a Valencian tartana, through scenes where tourists vulgarize in vain. He fought his traveller's battles over again, inspired by his listener's interest; shivered over a Madrid charcoal-stove in an inclement September, warmed in his great-coat, and racked with a headache afterwards; he escaped from being boiled alive in Lucerne, to be frozen in a sudden hailstorm on the top of Pilatus, and so brought upon the scene two of his companions who were enthusiastic mountaineers, and could initiate Daisy into some of the deep mysteries of higher climbing, at which Faucit confessed himself no adept. Like all true philosophers, he had for his principle live and let live, and saw no objection to men doing these things "if it amused them;" but how or why it did, baffled him except from the philosophic standpoint. He expressed the view mildly enough to Longshanks of New, of peaks and passes celebrity; but Longshanks was ready for him.

"Faucit sees nothing in Alp-climbing, Miss Fairfield,

because he hasn't given it a fair trial, and wasn't bitten at starting. And here am I who can see nothing in boating, or conceive what pleasure a man can find in turning his back to do his work, fixing another man's flannel shirt for his entire object of vision, and converting himself into a mechanical pendulum. So our odd world goes round. We like our likes with all our might, and see nothing in what other men like. Then, unless we discipline our minds, we get angry with them for liking what we don't, proceed to argue them out of it by fair means, and foul afterwards, and so cause persecutions, religious and political, all because everybody ought to agree with us. Here's your health, Faucit, and thanks for a very pleasant luncheon."

"With mine in return," laughed the host, "for such a complete edition in little of Longshanks's philosophy of history. I have known greater men say less in more words. And I am sure that Mrs. Pepperharrow agrees with me."

"That indeed I do," said the worthy lady; "and I ave enjoyed listening to you all very much. As for the old masters you've been talking of, I think they're quite perfect, and I'm always wanting my husband to buy them. But e says the new masters are what e

understands better, and they ought to be encouraged because they're alive."

"That's philosophy quite as good as Longshanks's, and of great value to many worthy men," said Faucit.

The luncheon was over and the party broke lazily up, not the least successful of the parties of that Commemoration. To two of them, at all events, it was a very great success. Faucit, a capital host at all times, had never been a better one than that day. Though essentially a "man's man," he never, like many of his kind, showed to better advantage than with ladies, for he had for them much of that instinctive deference and old-world courtesy whose decay Charles Lamb so feelingly deplores. He never gave up his own style of thought and talk in order to fall in with their supposed love of other subjects than men's; but, on the other hand, he never "talked down" to them by translating himself into another language, as if he were dealing with a different race, after the fashion of some popular orators when addressing an audience of working men. I doubt if any affectation on earth, though the result of mere want of tact, is more intensely provoking to those addressed, or those in sympathy with them.

With Mrs. Pepperharrow Guy established himself

that day as a favourite; and as for Daisy, he never had a more sympathetic listener or a more well-pleased guest.

Fast, fast, fast, the meshes of the net closed round those two; and when Guy parted with his guests at the gate, to go back and meditate over a sociable pipe with Longshanks, an old pupil who wanted some advice upon some question of New College municipal politics, it was with an understanding that he meant to be at the concert in the evening. He was there; and there again the pair took up their parable, over whose earlier stage of development there is no further need to dwell.

For some reason not to be defined, Daisy carried away quite a lofty impression of the knowledge of musical art possessed by the undergraduates of Oxford; and Guy himself was astonished at the effect produced upon him by Ponder's performance of "Oh, ruddier than the cherry," and Piper's declamation of "'Twas in Trafalgar's Bay." He even wrote an eulogistic article on Oxford music for the 'Saturday Review'; but it had the rare fate of being returned, with all apologies, by the editor, who thought that Mr. Faucit must have allowed himself to be carried away, and said that

his musical critic was unable to approve of the sentiments expressed.

The next morning—*mirabile dictu!*—Faucit might be seen at the station, seeing the ladies off, and accepting a warm invitation to call in town, that Miss Fairfield's parents might thank him for all his kindness and attention, to which she knew that really she had no claim at all, she said.

"It was so very good of you," Daisy added, demurely, "to waste so much of your time upon us."

"So very good," echoed the chaperon.

"I didn't waste a minute of it," Guy said. "My work and my boat will both profit by the change. Good-bye."

"Good-bye."

It had been arranged that Guy was to start for the English lakes with a reading party of young pupils immediately after the Oxford and Cambridge match and the Henley Regatta, which followed the break-up of the term. The pupils were astonished to find their plan disarranged, and to be asked to postpone the expedition for another month, to the close of the London season. When season, reading-party, and long vacation were all over, still more astonished and much

distressed was the Oxford world, and not his college alone, to learn that Faucit of Balliol, after six years of tutorhood, and with an established Oxford position, had made up his mind to leave the place and the life, and to study in London for the common-law bar.

CHAPTER VI.

THE IDYLL.

The chronicler of Guy Faucit and Daisy Fairfield uses his privilege here, and skims rapidly over the next scenes of their history.

It was the end of July before Daisy flitted to Switzerland with her parents for her first visit to that fairy playground; and it was the end of July before Faucit found himself installed in a cottage at the head of Grasmere Lake, with some candidates for "Greats" assembled for a reading-party. A reading-bee, perhaps, it is called now-a-days, as the dictionaries of Mark Twain and Bret Harte tend more and more, alas! to the supersession of Johnson and Webster in the old country. They were pleasant things, those reading-parties, in the days when I, Balbus, friend and contemporary of Faucit, was of them. They differed much

among themselves, for sometimes there was much reading and sometimes there was none, which turned more upon the character of the coach-in-office than anything else.

There was no lack of work when Faucit was to the fore. If after a short experience, and the few days grace allowed for settling down, he made up his mind that any one of the pupils, the while on pleasure bent, was not of reading mind, he gave him a gentle warning first, and then sent him about his business. He liked his pupils to do him credit as well as themselves, and would have no shirking; so, believing that a little leaven leavens the whole lump he disposed of black sheep summarily.

Dear old boy! how he comes before me as I think of him. We were the firmest of allies, and had many a literary taste in common. But my inveterate mistrust of literature, when veiled in the classic guise, made a subject of chronic disagreement between us, and any success I may since have had in life has been in the teeth of his sombre prognostics. I shied at the fascinations even of poetry when presented to me by Greeks—

"Timui Danaos et dona forentes,"

and the last French play, novel, or political treatise—the last I fear not the most—had greater charms for me than I could find in Plato. I wasted my time systematically in what my father called heroic idleness ("I do believe, Tom," he said to me once, "that if your foot slipped out of the stirrup on horseback you would prefer riding on like that to taking the trouble to put it in again"); and yet, alive and merry at it matters not what year, I cannot find that I am a whit the worse of it, in "purse or person;" but discover that I work at congenial occupations, albeit in no licensed profession, as hard as need be.

Well, well; it is no easier to arrive at the expediencies of life than it was in Solomon's time, in which respects that worthy old gentleman acted as a kind of moral "taster" to the universe. Years afterwards, thriving on unlicensed occupations in spite of experience, morality, and everything else, I ventured to say to the elder Mr. Balbus, himself a renowned and capable classic, that the great advantage of a classical education was this—you never regret having been idle. He laughed at the joke, but resented the inference.

I am not writing of myself, however, and must not forget that if my lovers—need I say, after the beginning,

what lovers they were before their month of frequent London meetings was over?—are to interest others in their fortunes, that obtrusive little vowel number three should be kept as much as possible out of sight.

Guy Faucit's ideas on the classics, and, indeed, on most matters, were more my father's than mine; and the magnificent energy with which he did everything he put his hand to was part of the strong, sweet nature of the man. Pupils of his could never fail to catch the infection more or less, and the Grasmere days were not soon forgotten by those who were with him there. They were all honour-men except Jem Gosling, whom, out of affectionate personal regard, Faucit admitted into the company, as a sort of little dog in attendance, giving him a special portion of his time in the evenings while the others were grappling with the higher Aristotelic problems, or learning from Thucydides—the discovery, perhaps, to blossom later—how excessively ill a man can write his own language, however beautiful, and yet be famous. That eminent historian is a perpetual encouragement to writers who can't write, and lives again, for the placid cynic, in many a modern misleader of youth, in the ranks of the 'Nineteenth Century' or the 'Fortnightly Review.'

Into the Grasmere Lake the party plunged in the morning soon after seven, for the introductory swim which was to brace them for the day. At eight, after the short household prayers which Faucit would never neglect—odd, men said, in that as in most things—they tackled one of those Oxonian breakfasts which are the memory and the despair of older digestions, and haunt like Tantalic phantoms the egg and bacon of later years, where the new Sangradism allows so much.

"Nothing I know," said Bones simply, on one occasion, "so sharpens the appetite for breakfast as a fried sole and a good bit of steak."

When the soles and the steaks and the porridge and the marmalade had vanished, and the tea and coffee had been corrected by the early beer, there were four hours of steady work to be done.

Faucit was a passed master as a guide to the classics, and would have made me like them if any one could. But I never took kindly to any of the set except Aristophanes, whose honest chuckle over everything and everybody was amazingly to my taste. Why doesn't our good friend W. S. Gilbert, quaintest in his line of modern English humourists, take a hint from the old fellow, and take up 'Demos' again in his last new

dress? I am fond of those old Greeks now, I don't know why; and perhaps I only wasn't then because I was expected to be. We are a contrary lot we mortals, and that's a fact.

But like them or lump them, it was a great sight to see Faucit, with his hands deep in his trousers pockets, and the short pipe clearing the mental atmosphere, walking up and down the little lake-room expounding, while the pupils listened or took notes, or asked and answered questions. He had the whole thing at his fingers' ends, and could dress up Plato's Republic improvisedly, in sympathetic and attractive English of his own. At another time he could tell anecdotes from Herodotus in a familiar style, quite after the old gossip's manner; and even on the perplexing mysteries of Aristotle's Ethics he could throw an original light, and moralize—as to me he often did—on the dangers of the career of the apolaustic man. If sometimes he attributed to the philosopher deep meanings and purposes of which he must have been entirely innocent, who shall blame him? Do not even the commentators of Shakespeare the same?

Half-an-hour's "yard-cricket" in the front of the house, with the centre-piece of the door for a wicket,

and a tennis-ball to bowl with, and then the honest early dinner, made the young students fit for their afternoon of hill-work. Long stretches over the slopes of Fairfield, or excursions into the smiling little district of Rydal, pilgrimages to the valley of St. John, whose grim serrated rocks seemed to the more imaginative among them to wear the very shape and form which once shone castle-wise, "in morning splendour full and fair," before the eyes of the Knight of Triermain on his love-quest—scenes where Faucit's loving knowledge of his Scotts and Wordsworths made him as much at home and as pleasant a companion as on earlier but not more classic ground—filled out the long summer afternoons till supper-time, and the two hours more of work which followed before turning in. Varied sometimes by boating on the lakes, sometimes perhaps by plunges into the pleasant circle of the local society, where bright eyes were glad to welcome these cheery young squires, and to beam their best on them (Gosling had a special aptitude for making himself acceptable to the owners of those eyes, whom he generically classed as "Maries" from that hour)—those Grasmere days ran into weeks which left a sunny memory behind them. Every now and again a

period of grace was allowed, when the more enquiring spirits shouldered knapsacks, and started for a tramp over passes and valleys, by rattling "forces" and smiling meres, to shelter for the night in some cozy "Angler's rest" of the old pre-company pattern, white and clean as its mistress's apron, and nestled under the shelter of the everlasting hills.

Pleasant days! pleasant times, full of enjoyment for the moment and retrospect for the future. I know not how it may be with others; but for me, as I grow older, these memories seem to grow more vivid every day; even as oddly enough the very classical gentlemen whom I neglected so heartily at the time, as I fancied, seem to exercise an increasing influence over my thoughts and work even when I don't take them up again. They come and wax unbidden, those associations of the past; and scenes and events which seemed at the time to make but slight impressions upon a mind then more set, out of work-hours, upon odd corners of itself than anything else, come all of a sudden, as I sit down to write or to remember, out of the little nooks of the brain-house into which they must have crept all unawares. And out they come full-grown, like so many awkward Minervas.

It was the summer of the comet-year, perhaps; and many a night-drive home from Keswick, or from handier Ambleside, would our party have after a longer field-day than usual, when the whole firmament seemed lit, and the stars put out, by the lustre of that old phenomenon, which has lost none of its strangeness in losing all its terror. It has been explained away, thoroughly; but there it was, all the same. Somebody did it. And Faucit would quote to the reverential Gosling the haunting lines of the northern poet:—

> "Oh, on thy sparkling prow to ride!
> To cleave the depths of Heaven with thee!
> To plough the twinkling stars aside,
> Like foam-bells on a tranquil sea!"

And Gosling would intimate, with much conviction, that he didn't understand it much, but it was "doosid fine." Fair fall thy criticisms, honest Jem! They were better than wiser that I wot of.

Guy Faucit, meanwhile? What was he thinking of all this time? He never lost himself in his work, for his pupils said that he never went at it harder, and he carried more than one of them into a triumphant first. But in the walks and on the boats he was not quite so companionable as usual, except with one rather

silent member of his regiment, with whom he consorted for choice to the surprise of the others, and smoked many pipes.

When one of those parties among Gosling's friends "the Maries" took place, Guy was apt to excuse himself, take the opportunity of strolling off alone with some book in his pocket, which usually stayed there, throw himself at full length upon the turf which slopes suddenly down into the waters of Grasmere on the Rydal-ward side, or sit there dreamily and "corrig" loose boulders into the lake below.

Unwitting of other presence than his own, he one day nearly "corriged" into another world Jem Gosling and a Mary, whom that seductive youth had persuaded to go a-flirting with him.

They were lying on the slope below Faucit, and the boulder shaved the Honourable James's nose. He said afterwards that the Clipper was jealous, and must have a love-fever on him. Guy laughed, and looked very kindly at the lad. His heart had stood still for the moment when he found what an escape he had had.

Ah! that love-fever! It must run its course like other tertians, though many doctors try their hands at stopping it, or at "throwing it out."

What were Guy's meditations on the lake-side those lonely afternoons? He had nothing but his fellowship, and the little that would come to him from his mother. The dear old mother! how irregularly he seemed to write to her now. He must run down to Devonshire directly the reading-party broke up, for he longed for a kiss to the silvery-hair, a welcome from the silvery voice. It would be a long time, he trusted and prayed, before that little came; and then it could not change his life.

He had resolved upon an Oxford career; for with his fellowship and his pupils, and what he made by his pen—not much, perhaps, that last, for journalism is not an El Dorado, even when exclusively followed—he had now a very good income to boast of in those rent-free rooms of his.

But—ah! those buts! How they come breaking in upon our best soliloquies, worrying our strongest purposes, breach-making in our favourite castles of the air!

Suppose he changed his plans now, and left Oxford, what should he do? He could keep his fellowship, of course, as long as— Exactly. "But" again. Why wasn't his what they call a married

fellowship? but it wasn't. Besides, he was twenty-eight, and an old don. Could he make enough by his pen to make a profession of it? impossible to say. And it was, he knew, very hard and up-hill work. The bar? that resource of all the ardent spirits with no special professional bent of their own, that mystic profession which "leads to everything," but begins in nothing, except expense, and, alas! too often ends there. Besides, he could not bear the idea of law. That wouldn't matter to him, though; and that thought was soon put aside.

Sir Benjamin Brodie, speaking of his own original distaste for medicine, had said that any man worth his salt could teach himself to like any serious work he had to live by. And the saying was quite after Guy's own heart. Why hadn't he done like his friend Wilmot, who took his first at the same time, and an Oriel fellowship directly afterwards, and then went straight to London to read for the bar?

London—there must be great advantages in living in London, of various kinds. There was a very pleasant smile on Faucit's face at this point of the secret discourse. What a pity somebody wasn't there to see it! Wilmot had been called now three years, and was

already well spoken of on the Western Circuit, where he had made quite a hit by holding some briefs for more advanced juniors, and had distinguished himself on his own account at Exeter sessions, on some knotty point of settlement law.

He, Faucit, had some friends among the Exeter attorneys, and he could be called in three years from November, if he began at once, and ate the first steps of his way to the woolsack, as by custom recognised and provided.

Three years! he would be thirty-one. Well—he wouldn't be less if he began later. And really he must do something. This Oxford business was growing impossible—wouldn't do. He believed that half the difficulties of the bar were fables, if you had brains and stuck to work. And wouldn't he? Why at thirty-five— Then the shadows of Guy's magic-lantern began to shift and move, and to be lit by soft prismatic hues radiating from the basket of Alnaschar. He saw a prosperous and successful life before him, not prisoned in the quadrangles of sleepy Oxford, but in the busy turmoil of London the magnificent. He saw himself working and rising—first remarked, then distinguished, then great, and passing away in the fulness of years, to

leave, as his best legacy, his name behind him. He saw many things; but in and through them all he saw just this. Pledged first, then waiting, then united; always kindling, helping, comforting, consoling; he pictured to himself one fair and perfect woman ever and always at his side.

It was on one evening towards the close of that lake-sojourn that Faucit made to his pupils the announcement which our readers were privileged to learn at the end of the last chapter.

What was she doing the while, that lady of the dream? Far away, perhaps, on the terrace which looks down on the curling little river which runs by the town of Berne, where the opposite heights rise suddenly and picturesquely up, and the mighty giants of the Oberland, shaded and softened by the distance, keep watch and ward on the horizon, Daisy Fairfield was sitting alone, with half-an-hour to herself before the *table d'hôte.* Her hands were folded on her lap, and her eyes were set steadily upon the beautiful mountain vision, as the shapes of Schreckhorn and Finster-aar-horn were imaging themselves firmly in that keen and open mind. And in the double process of thought which runs so oddly through our lives, even while

she drank the charm of that masterpiece of landscape in, she too was dreaming out her sweet and maidenly dream. Oh, so pure, so true, so maidenly! so full of that fearless innocence of life and thought which, when a man is brought for the first time fairly face to face with its inner secrets, teaches him first to be ashamed, and then to rejoice—to rejoice with fear and reverence over what God has done and does, even over what God can pardon and undo.

As the young girl sat there, framed like an Ary Schaeffer with the distance in her eyes, one after another the passers-by turned back to look at her; involuntarily, courteously, for she was not one of those who may be looked on too rudely. But she was conscious of no look, no gaze; she seldom was. If Guy Faucit had known how rare indeed was the glance which had followed him that first day on the banks of the Isis, he would have been many inches a prouder man. So the passers-by looked at her unrebuked, and whispered about the "belle Anglaise," or the "schöner Engländerinn," in their various tongues; and Daisy sat dreaming on.

Sometimes—and in spite of myself—the tears come to my eyes when I write and think of her. My own

dear wife, Dorothy Balbus, owns her for her best and dearest friend: for this is no tragedy I am writing, thank God, though the drama leads through many paths of stone and thorns. And there is no name more often on my wife's lips and mine than the name she now so beautifully bears. She was thinking of Guy Faucit even as he was thinking of her, in a sweet fancy of love and dependence, yet of mutual help. What it meant, her dream of marriage, she neither knew nor asked herself, in any exactness of shape. She knew that she loved Guy Faucit, and was very proud and ambitious for him; and though no word had been spoken on either part, I think she knew that he loved her. She had talked much with him, as she came to know him during their frequent London meetings, — he had been at her father's house, and often, and had neglected no place where she might be,—of his future and his plans of life, and had urged him much to come to London, and boldly to try the bar. He was too good to waste on Oxford reclusion. At first:—for afterwards, as the better knowledge became better still, there came a certain shyness over those urgings of hers, and she said less. He noticed it, or thought he did; and

passed to much self-questioning as to what it might mean.

When they parted in London he had, we know, formed no definite idea of leaving Oxford; and something of her doubts was in her fancies now. Would he really go back to college, and not find something to do in London? If he did—well. She didn't know. Of the fears and reasons that held Faucit back she knew nothing. She was rich, or would be, in the world's goods, and how could she use them better than in helping a great man to a great career? For he could be great, she was sure. And I think I can do no better justice to Faucit's sense or to Faucit's honour, than by saying that the thought of Daisy's money was not only the last that occurred to him in the matter, but struck him as a serious obstacle in his way. How could he come forward for the rich merchant's daughter, with neither position nor means, and even with brains unproven for the achieving of either? And therein, perhaps, Guy Faucit measured the canons of society only too well. Meanwhile, however, whatever the future might have in store for them, among the fairest scenes of nature in her most various moods, and among all the surroundings of men and women

who knew nothing of what was passing in their hearts, though they rubbed elbows every day, Guy Faucit and Daisy Fairfield thought from morning to evening, in very plain English, of nothing in the world but each other.

CHAPTER VII.

MOTHER AND SON.

In a quiet corner of Devonshire, by some one of the tiny Combes which lie between Teignmouth and Torquay, and make the coast-walk from one of those places to the other one of the prettiest which the pedestrian can find on a summer's day, Guy Faucit had found a home for the long-widowed mother, who had till then been his love. He always came back to the old lady with fresh and renewed affection; kept her when he was away constantly informed of all his doings and all his plans, and found in her a wise as well as an admiring adviser. With all her pride in Guy's Oxford successes, and all her sympathy with his enthusiasm for his pursuits there, she had a knack of shaking her head over his monastic theories of life. Charmed

with her only child's exclusive devotion, and repaying it with womanly interest—how much did she not think of him, after all, in comparison to all his thoughts of her?—she nevertheless was very firmly convinced that the boy ought to marry and would marry, and returned to the charge upon that point with unfailing pertinacity. Many and many a friendly battle-royal did the two have together in the bright parlour—I like the old-fashioned word where yet not out of place—where the roses clustered round the porch, and on the other side of the little trim garden the limes shut out the road. During his visits to Devonshire, which he made a point of paying for some substantial part of every vacation, Guy carried the old mother about under protest to many of the parties and gatherings which went on in the hospitable western county, at which mother and son were always more than welcome. They provided her with a circle of friends who were sure to look after her and find company for her when he was away, for he didn't like to think of her as dull or too much alone.

Now it happens, that to the well-balanced taste the young ladies of Devon are possessed of many and great attractions; and Mrs. Faucit was firmly persuaded that

quite the majority of them were secretly in love with Guy already, and asked nothing better than to meet him half-way, if he were disposed to the mysterious step called "coming forward." When the parties and gatherings were over, thus much would she expound to him in the profoundest confidence, while he gravely smoked his pipe by the roses. There had been a little difficulty over the tobacco at first, Mrs. Faucit having been brought up in ante-nicotian days when smoking was an illicit trade, and relegated to the kitchen or the harness-room. Guy had given in with the best of graces till his mother began to find that she grudged so much of his society to his pipe, and thought it best to make advances to her rival, who now lived with her on the pleasantest of terms. She had been heard to confess that she even liked it, and the final victory was achieved by Guy's machiavellian craft. Mrs. Faucit always said that she could detect the slightest trace of tobacco in a room for days afterwards. For four or five nights consecutively Guy smoked in the dining-room, with the due precautions, after she had gone to bed, and confessed one morning when the old lady's blissful ignorance was apparent. The next night he didn't smoke; and at breakfast Mrs. Faucit, demonstratively

sniffing, declared that the smell was intolerable. But she was of a candid mind; and on the weakness of the proposition being demonstrated, she gave in. So the pipe among the roses became a recognized institution; and their beauteous majesties of the garden bloomed none the worse for it.

Here, in the parlour then, many and many a time after they had come home, did these two who were all in all to each other discuss how they might become less. Guy would explain that it was impossible; that the Fates had shaped him a course at the university, where, though a wife was a forbidden luxury, a mother was not. When his position was definite enough; when a certain professorship, which was generally regarded as his reversion, had fallen in his way, and he had fairly settled down to his stride, his mother was to leave the Devonshire cottage and keep house for him at Oxford, as he should leave the rooms in Balliol, and set up a homestead of his own. He had mapped out his future upon these definite lines, and he did not mean to disturb it.

"I've married my mother," he said; "and the day shall come when she shall be a hostess well-known in Oxford circles, and all the pleasantest

society in the place shall meet in her drawing-rooms."

This was his filial castle in the air; and men have built worse before now, I think. But Mrs. Faucit could not be brought to agree.

"Marriage, my dear old boy, is the law for all nice people; and you were never intended to be one of the exceptions. You ought to be independent, of course, and to be able to make up to any one you choose, and go into Parliament, where you would get a great name, and be asked into the ministry directly. It is simply too bad of James Foster, my only brother in the world, and he with neither kith nor kin of his own, not to give you a handsome allowance out of all that money of his, and acknowledge you as his heir. Whom else has he got; and whom does he want better, I should like to know?"

"Don't talk about him, mother," said Faucit, whose face always grew dark at the mention of James Foster's name.

"But I must talk about him. How can I help talking about an only brother with his tens of thousands a-year, and my poor sister Mary dead and gone? I wish you'd write to him."

"Mother! how can you even think of it? when you have so often told me yourself of his conduct to you and my father when you married, and always afterwards."

"Who knows but he may have been right, my dear? Your poor father with his half-pay—quarter-pay I called it—and I with my little bit of money; no wonder that he thought the marriage so rash and wrong."

"Rash and wrong! when he could have helped you had he cared, without even feeling it! Don't talk any more about him; I hate to hear his name. All his endless meannesses afterwards, about trusteeships, and Heaven knows what besides, didn't make things much better, did they? Daring to dictate to my grand old soldier-father, and pretend to look down on him from the heights of the stocking-trade! He had better find his needle's eye to creep through and make haste about it, the old miser!"

"Oh, Guy, what a very shocking quotation!"

"Awful. I am the profanest of men, as you know. Uncle James indeed!" and Guy laughed. "Shall I ever forget the last and about the only time I ever saw him, when I suppose I was about thirteen years old?

Don't you remember, mother, when he drove past us in his gig, and said, 'Is that your boy, Kattie? Why, he's not brown—he's black!' Pleasant creature! how I should like to kick him!"

"Well, dear, it wasn't nice," said the mother with a sigh, who would have done anything for that boy of hers, and was moreover of a placable disposition. "But quarrels in families are such weary things; and I do believe that if you wrote to him—"

"I shan't, you know, mother. We're not rich, but we're comfortable; and if I go on as I am we shall be more than comfortable some day. I don't like family-quarrels either, and have no objection to making up, even with old grey-shirtings. But—*que messieurs les assassins commençant*. When Mr. Foster comes with his hat in his hand and begs our pardon, perhaps we'll ask him to tea. And now let's change the subject. Who was the last young lady you said was breaking her heart for me, at the Powderham archery meeting yesterday?"

"I didn't say breaking her heart, dear. I wish you'd be more accurate."

"But you implied it, you bad old woman; you know you did."

"Well, dear, Alice Maitland is a very nice girl indeed, and it's no use saying she isn't. And Maitland's bank is one of the oldest and best in London.

"Alice Maitland is nice, and the bank is even nicer. But I think, mother, that I like Rose Plummer better."

"Do you, really? Well, Rose Plummer is a very nice girl too, and will have a nice fortune, though she's not as rich as the other. But Sir John Plummer has a great influence in the county, and might sit for it if he liked. Still I do think you oughtn't to flirt so dreadfully with both of them. It isn't fair upon the poor girls."

"How odd you women are about each other," laughed Guy. "The moment we like a girl, and talk to her a little more, or waltz with her a little oftener than usual, it isn't 'fair'; and we are always expected to 'mean' something. I can't make out how on earth anybody ever marries anybody, as you're always pulled up before you've time to find out anything about a girl except that you rather like her. I don't believe the girls agree with you a bit, or expect anything, or wish for anything except to be left alone for a while, just as the men do!"

The old lady shook her head. "You don't know girls as I do, Guy. How are they to know what men mean?"

"Easy enough, I should think. But I tell you what it is, little mother: if they're what you make them out they're a poor lot, and I don't want to have anything to do with them."

"But, Guy—"

"But, mother. Now let's have some backgammon." And the champion of the river and the tennis-court proceeded to devote himself with a single heart, unscathed by the influences of Alice Maitland and Rose Plummer, to the mysteries of cinq-quater and deuce-ace. Mrs. Faucit shook the box and returned to the charge.

"Nevertheless, Guy, I should like to see you with a good wife."

"Very well, then; find me one. Flirt with her yourself, propose to her yourself, and come and live with us."

"No, dear, I shan't."

"Well, then, I shan't either."

The discussion stands for many which went on between the mother and son, before the summer when

Guy Faucit met Daisy Fairfield at the Christchurch ball, and came down to the Devonshire cottage from the lakes, with a new life and a new feeling stirring in his heart.

* * * * * *

"Then you are in earnest this time, my dear child?"

"I am afraid I am, my mother, very much."

"God bless you, my son. I am sure that Miss Fairfield is all that I could ever wish; and I shall be so glad and proud to welcome her."

"There's a good deal to happen before that, mother," answered Guy, laughing. "I've got to win her, you know, to begin with."

"I don't think there can be very much doubt about that," the mother answered, in a tone of very placid conviction.

Guy laughed again.

"You dear old prophet of good, may your confidence be well grounded. Let me look at you, mother mine."

He rested his two hands upon her shoulders, and looked down from his height of vantage upon the soft smooth bands of silver hair.

"Can you give up the dream of the Oxford home,

and think of me as the hard-working barrister in smoky old London, toiling for the dear life and the dearer love ?"

"I never believed in the Oxford home, my boy; and I always told you so. And I shall love to think of the work in London, which is the only place for a man like you. I must do my best to help you."

"What, mother? It shall make no difference to you whatever."

"Oh, but it must."

"Oh, but it mustn't. Why, I have calculated means, and I shall do splendidly. I shall take small living-chambers in the Temple, not to be at double expense. I shall write a good deal more than I have done, for I think I have the connection for that already; and with my fellowship, which is a good one, I shall be more than able to manage. Not a penny off the help that I have been able to give the mother."

"Oh, Guy! it is not right. It is I that should be helping you."

"You dear old lady! you look like it, don't you? Why I wouldn't lose a bit of the pride I have in helping to keep up the Devonshire cottage, not even for all the Miss Fairfields to be found!"

"That doesn't sound like being properly in love," said Mrs. Faucit.

"I think it does; and I don't think Miss Fairfield would agree with you."

"But the Bar is so expensive. Ain't there all sorts of fees at starting?"

"I've saved enough to pay them. You know what an old screw I am; quite a touch of uncle James. Yes, mother, I am going to try my fortune in London, like so many waifs from Dick Whittington downwards. It's a face to do it for, isn't it?"

There was a photograph in Guy's hands.

"Yes, dear, it's a lovely face, and a good face. My Guy would never have chosen any other. God bless you and guard you and help you, my boy, and as you will be as good a husband as you are a good son, may He grant you your heart's desire."

Very fondly the two kissed and embraced and parted; and it was with a heart purified and a will strengthened by the mother's blessing, that Guy Faucit started bravely on the London career which has seen so many win, and so many, to all outward seeming no less gallant and no less deserving, founder and fail.

CHAPTER VIII.

TERM-EATING.

THE young Balliol fellow settled to his new work with all the will in him, and soon began to find the truth of the maxim of Sir Benjamin Brodie, with which he had comforted himself. After the historians and philosophers and poets who had grown such familiar friends with him, he found it difficult at first to realize the attractions of style and thought to be found in 'Byles on Bills,' or Fearne's 'Contingent Remainders'; and 'Smith's Leading Cases' led at times to wandering thoughts, and to a sense of almost impossible boredom.

In spite of himself he reverted to some dearly-loved point of classic controversy, and detected himself in the act of fighting old battles over again on the old ground, somewhere in the fields of thought. But I

have elsewhere spoken of Guy's great power over himself, for he had realized early in life the truth of the maxim which Dickens laid down, which sooner or later every man must realize who is really to succeed in anything. He had mastered while still at school the secret of "patient ungrudging attention," to which Dickens attributed all his own success, though in the case of that high authority perhaps there was something more to start with than falls to the share of most men.

So at it Guy went again all the harder for these deviations of the compass; and it was a sight to see him, both his hands holding tight to his hair, and the elbow-seams of his coat suffering considerably from their violent contact with the table, grappling with the "construction," as the grammarians call it, of some sentence of inordinate length, without apparent verb, and with neither beginning nor end, in which the potent, grave, and reverend authors of our law-books can give many points to my old enemy Thucydides himself. I hold the authors of law-books as a race altogether apart in the wonders of their style, and their mastery of that art of meaning-no-meaning which is so heavy a tax on their readers. Except some of the

propounders of the new scientific gospels, I know of none to match them in that way. I hate a page which has to be read five times before any meaning can be distilled from it, and then turns out to be either gibberish, or else some faultless platitude which might have been expressed in a line if it was to be expressed at all.

Thus not long ago, in the 'Fortnightly Review,' I think, did I find myself studying a profound treatise on the Laws of Rhyme, from which I thought to gather instruction and advantage. One half-page held me riveted for a long time, for it was beautifully fine, and I felt that when I once understood it I should realize some great truth. I was on the eve of discovery, and meditated on my author profoundly. I forget the exact words he used, but they were something like this—

"In rhyme, everything depends upon a certain assonance and a certain assured sequence in the collocation of what we call the vowels and the consonants; and if the strict conditions therein implied fail to be watchfully and systematically observed, the result is a lapse of the delicate concord of musical sound which seizes and arrests the cultivated ear, once

attuned to the eternal laws of harmony and proportion," etcetera, etcetera.

That, or something like it, went on for a page; and at last I found that it meant exactly this, nor less nor more: that a "hat" rhymes to a "cat," but not to a "bag."

It was a great consolation to Faucit, after much wrestling of the spirit and internal perplexity over the abstruseness of English law, to find that nine-tenths of the abstruseness lay in the way in which it was put —or rather wasn't, the "putting" being often conspicuous by its absence—and to discover to his great satisfaction that half the pages he read might have been boiled down into as many words. Writers who undertake to write, especially upon knotty subjects, ought to go through a competitive examination first, based upon primitive syntax and words in not more than three syllables; for with rare exceptions, never yet has writer won the big prizes save by simplicity of style. Be as eloquent as Ruskin or Newman, if you can; as witty as Thackeray; as scholarly as Cockburn; as fanciful as Charles Lamb; but mark that the whole setting of the wit and the eloquence, the scholarship and the fancy, are this and only this—simplicity. And

for the sake of long-suffering mankind, observe one maxim more. When you have nothing to write about, let it alone. The "laws of rhyme," for instance, are briefly contained in the summary I ventured to give of the valuable thoughts of my "assonant" friend. Rhyme has just that law, and no other. "*C'est si facile de ne pas écrire,*" was de Morny's answer to the unsuccessful dramatist who complained to him that "*ce n'est pas si facile d'écrire une comédie.*"

Having solved this original problem to his satisfaction, Faucit worked with a will. As he looked at the uninviting calf which began to invade his beloved book-cases, and felt it his duty to furnish the little chambers in Garden Court in orthodox legal fashion, he sighed sometimes over the artistic Balliol rooms. But the purpose that was in him was far too strong for vain regrets, and apart and away from that, the ambition of London life soon began to hold him. If he was not the Cæsar that he had been at Oxford, the dominant nature of the man asserted itself in his new life as it did everywhere.

In the debating societies which met in and about the cozy taverns just east of Temple Bar, to be remembered in future generations, probably, only by

the hideous landmark of the city griffin, where law questions were debated with zest and interest by the self-educating among the sucking advocates, Faucit made his mark at once, as he had done before at the Union, on the grave question whether Mr. Disraeli was or was not fit to lead the Conservative Party, or whether the Oxford youth would or would not lend its support to the foreign policy of the day.

I fear that the majority of us, for I too tried my 'prentice hand at the bar, were content with the education provided for us by the benchers, in the shape of dinners in hall.

Beginning his work in November, when the fees and the fogs begin circulating together, Faucit deferred till after Christmas the necessary course of reading with a pleader, as he preferred to know something of the elements of his business before he began.

The hundred guineas were rather a wrench; but, as he told his mother, he had saved money, and all luxuries he retrenched at once from his manner of living. No more delicate little scout-laid dinners, or choice bottles of wine with a friend; only the homely mutton and the frothing beer, which my healthy-minded young athlete liked just as well. It disturbed

him a little to think that he might run to fat, but he forestalled the danger by a vigorous course of fencing at Waite's rooms in Soho Square, and an occasional migration to Lord's for a turn at the tennis.

A very pleasant set of rooms were those of Faucit's in Garden Court, looking down from their third floor upon the green little gardens of the Middle Temple on the one side,—no embankment stood between that and the water then,—and on the other on the plashing fountain at the head of the steps, which was such a pleasant object both to look and to listen to, like an oasis of rest in the deserts of law-strife. For what reason it was improved off the face of the earth I know not; but when its innocent babble was extinguished, there was mourning among the dwellers in Garden Court.

I had myself been called to the bar some three years when Faucit took up his quarters in the Temple; and very welcome was his arrival to me and others of his Oxford contemporaries. I was taking the law easily, as I had taken the classics; and failing entirely to achieve Faucit's patience over his law-books, I felt that if I was ever to arrive at greatness in the law, it would have to be thrust upon me by imperious

circumstance. Imperious circumstance did indeed try it for a time, and threw many briefs and a good round practice in my way; but Nature was too strong in me even for circumstance, and my incorrigible idleness was the cause of much mourning in the Balbus family, who predicted untimely ends for me which have not yet come to pass.

Fred Wilmot was the third of the Balliol chums who now re-united in the chambers in Garden Court, and consorted in frequent companionship together.

Fast friends we were in those cheery days, though Wilmot was the very reverse of me, being all that the Wilmot family could desire, and penetrated with legal ambition and legal lore. His was a light which, in consequence, now burns and shines as it ought, for is not Wilmot the acknowledged leader of his circuit, and sure of speedy promotion to the bench? Only a morning or two ago I was reading with admiration an argument of his in a case in which a clergyman had been imprisoned for breaking the law, wherein he proved, past my contradiction, that an eminent judge who was responsible for the proceeding had broken it in half-a-dozen different places himself.

Wilmot and Faucit had many a deep discussion

upon law together, as in old days upon Aristotle or Plato, at which, as in old days also, I assisted as an admiring listener—my remarks, when I made any, being with much consent treated as trivial. I was not in any way regarded as a serious person; and it was a puzzle to many, myself included, why I chose my special friends, or was chosen by them, from among the more studious spirits of my time, when I should obviously have herded with the drones.

I am no nearer to any philosophic system of life now than I was when I read Mill, and didn't believe a word of him; but I fancy that through all that idleness of mine there must have been a large amount of observation and meditation at work, which was to bear fruit for me later, when my emancipated spirit had got out of the legal shell, and had become free to circulate in a literary atmosphere of its own.

As for Faucit, none of us ever had any doubt that he would come out clear first in anything and everything he chose to put his hand to. Young as he was at the work, he soon found his connection in journalism extending and growing solid, and felt with relief that if the bar failed him he would after all have a profession to fall back upon. But he would not let the

pen tempt him too far, or use it for anything but a help at starting.

A few years before, and even journalism had been under police supervision in a barrister who meant business.

"There are callings," said Lord Ellenborough, "in which to be suspected of literature is dangerous."

But more liberal ideas were beginning to prevail, and even solicitors to allow that a man cannot live upon hope while he is waiting for their briefs, but must help himself as best he may as long as he does it with a due amount of reticence. So Guy Faucit stuck resolutely to anonymous work, and suppressed his personality in literature.

As for me, in a weak moment I wrote a farce which was acted in public, and audaciously claimed the authorship. Then all was over, and my prospects were blasted. They have never recovered. Never mind.

"John, my son," said an anxious parent to a co-barrister and co-author of mine, who had like proclivities, "how can you be such a fool as to write a play? If you stick to the bar you may become a Brougham."

"I may," he said; "and if I stick to the plays

I may become a Sheridan. One's just as likely as the other; and of the two I prefer Sheridan."

John held to his evil courses, and is now making a very handsome income of his own. It is very wrong; but he is. They have balances at their bankers, some of those dramatists, improper though it be.

Very strange and very wonderful are the ways of fate; and no stranger lot than Faucit's did she hold in that mysterious urn of hers. There was to be no calling to the bar, no legal name or legal success, for him from whom his friends all hoped so much. Rather they did not hope; they felt sure. Yet, in one year from the day when we dined with him by way of chamber-warming in Garden Court, upon a feast of oysters,—cheap then and plentiful, and consumed by the young votaries of Themis, not grudgingly or sparingly, or in the uncomforting shifts of Blue-Points or French immigrants, but in rich native luxuriance over the counters of Prosser,—and of beefsteaks and beer, the dream was to be over and the future gone, and our model and hero, all his moorings severed and lost, was to drift away out of sight, as lost to us as Merlin in the hollow oak, and even in the minds which held him dearest to linger but as a memory. We should have

made more of him that winter, Wilmot and I, and of all the rich stores we drew from his strong sense and scholarship and shrewd imagination, had we known what and how soon was to be the end of that pleasant chapter in our lives. He was one who needed confidence and sympathy, and was expansive with his close allies, though with the many he was reticent about himself.

So it was not long before Wilmot and I knew the reason of his change of plans and life, which had puzzled us at first, well aware as we were of his attachment to Oxford, and of his tenacity of purpose. He was one of those men who seem bound to live heart-whole, and supplied a crucial test of the absurdity of predicating such a thing of anybody. When they do go, these ironclads, they do. Faucit concealed nothing from Wilmot or from me, who kept his counsel. He felt pretty sure that he had made an impression upon Daisy Fairfield's thoughts and heart, and had a confidence in her very fine to see. He was in no hurry to speak; but if she cared about him—and he would spare no effort to make that certain—she would wait as trustfully as he. She knew well enough what his thoughts and wishes were, he said, even when they

parted in the summer. Or if she doubted them, what did she think when, towards the close of November, when he had settled well down in harness, they met face to face in one of the winter exhibitions?

Very warm on both sides was the shake of the hand; and Guy's quick eye had already detected the faint sweet flush which brought the rose-tinge to the clear face, whose every line he knew so well. Many of its myriad expressions he had still to learn. So, alas! had she, poor child!

"You in London, Mr. Faucit?" she said. "Can Oxford spare you just now?"

"I have left Oxford," he quietly answered.

She looked quickly up, and spoke slowly, with a certain pleased surprise.

"You—have left—Oxford?"

"Yes; I am living in chambers in the Temple, and am reading hard for the Bar."

"I am very glad," she answered, frankly and straightforwardly. "I am sure that you will make yourself a great name in that profession before long."

"I shall try," he said gravely. "At all events, you see I have taken your advice."

"Did I advise you to do it?"

"More than once. Have you forgotten?"

"No; I remember now that I did. But I should not like to think that I am responsible for so grave a change of purpose."

"Very many have advised me to it as well as you," Guy answered. "Indeed, most of my friends, I think. So if I turn out a failure I won't sue you for damages. But somehow I don't feel as if I should."

"No, indeed. For earnest men, Mr. Faucit, there is no such word as fail. I suppose you will live like a hermit in your Temple chambers."

"Not quite, I hope. I never believed in shutting oneself up as the best way of working. Change of mental air is the best receipt for everybody. I shall hope to come and call in Portland Place very soon indeed. Have you been back long?"

Jesuistry, Master Guy. He knew perfectly well she hadn't: for had not he and I walked past the house in Portland Place only three days before, and seen the blinds down? Guy walked very often up Portland Place. He found the air of the Regent's Park bracing, he said.

"No," said Daisy; "we stayed a little time in Paris on our way home, and only came back yesterday.

I have so much to tell you of our Swiss tour, and all the delight I had in it. When will you come?"

"Shall you be at home to-morrow?"

"Yes; by five o'clock."

"Will you give me a cup of tea then?"

"Yes."

And the next day, at that pleasantest hour of social interchange, the bright silver tea-urn in Portland Place once more took up the accompaniment to the old, old song.

CHAPTER IX.

FAIRFIELD AND CO.

THERE were signs that winter that all was not well with the house of Fairfield. How is it that people know or suspect mischief in the business air? There are no outward and visible signs. The house goes on as usual; the payments are as sure and regular. In the City the same routine goes on with the steadiness of clockwork; and at the West-End Madam has her dinner-parties and receptions, and Miss her horses and her enjoyments. But there are unaccustomed clouds on the face of the master of the house; certain asperities and inequalities in his ways and speech which betray themselves to the home-observers who know him so well. And in the City chambers there are conferences between the partners, frequent and

unusually protracted; and the confidential clerk, who is the marrow of the concern perhaps, is summoned to assist at them, and comes out looking rather grave, though nothing escapes him which his curious juniors can build a theory upon. But Dick confides to Harry over the mid-day chop and pint, and Harry wonders if the governor can possibly be shaky, though that anything can really be wrong with Fairfield and Co. seems an idea too absurd to be entertained seriously, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera,—*La calumnia e un venticello,*—and Harry and Dick, unconsciously enough, perhaps, set the stone of talk rolling, which, unlike the fabled rock of Sisyphus, has a knack of working its way up-hill all by itself when it is once started.

People in the City spoke doubtfully of the old ship Fairfield and Co. A younger partner had come in, bitten with the new theories of City-progress, and was bent upon enlarging the operations of the firm.

Old Threadneedle, the confidential clerk, very much disapproved of the new partner, and was for keeping the house in the old and quiet grooves in which she had run without a creak for so many years. He disliked the new order of things very much, and maintained that if the City was to become a colony of Jews and

Germans, and to exist for nothing but for the forcing of hothouse fortunes, the old English traders should hold the more to the old ways, and keep a quiet corner to themselves in the middle of the scamper.

But in that, as in many things, Conservatism and Obstruction grow something mixed, and the tyrant Progress insists on having his way. It was surely by some odd freak worth the meditations of the political enquirer, that it was just when the City was growing more and more revolutionary in her own business-ways, that she suddenly ratted in her political creed, and turned Tory.

Mr. Fairfield, the head of the house, was to those who knew him casually not a nice man. His externals were against him, for his architecture was of the florid-combative order, and he was big and overbearing of manner. His voice was harsh, and creaked and grated in the sound—peculiarities aggravated by the fact that he had a sensitive throat, and was always losing the voice he had. His eyebrows were bushy, and his hair rebellious, more like a white wire-fence than anything else. He was rather a bully at home too, or poor delicate Mrs. Fairfield's frightened face belied him. She was always ailing, poor little lady, and nobody

ever quite knew what with till she went quietly out of the world without any particular reason, a few years after the time I am writing of.

Some people there are who are ill in that indefinite way all their lives, and thereby cause pitying affection in some, and irritation in others.

Mrs. Fairfield irritated her husband, who was assertively strong and rude of health, and furious with the local weakness in his bronchial arrangements, which was tiresome without being in the slightest degree interesting. Moreover, he could have got rid of it in a fortnight by drinking less wine. Moreover, he knew it, and was exceedingly angry if anybody told him so.

He lectured Mrs. Fairfield on her partiality for doctors, who, indeed, did the poor lady very little good, making general remarks about want of tone which were both obvious and feeble. They were particular about the wine she drank, which varied according to the medical fashion of the season. This year it was hock. Indeed, each season has its special vintage from the physician's point of view as much as from the vine-grower's. However, I don't think the faculty did Mrs. Fairfield any harm, or that there was any harm or good to be done to her, simple, neutral-tinted soul.

She clung to Daisy with a fond and close affection, which the young girl returned with interest, watching her mother with a protecting tenderness very good to see. She was a bulwark often between her and the lord-and-master's tempers; for Mr. Fairfield was in his way very fond and proud of Daisy too, and rarely showed any disposition to bully her. Indeed, with all her sweetness of nature, Daisy Fairfield was not easy to bully. Any attempt of the kind missed its mark somehow, and made itself look foolish, and perished of inanition. There was a sort of uncompromising and fearless straightness about her, clear-set in the great blue eyes, which baffled dictation as much as it subdued impertinence. The latter, somehow, was out of the question with her altogether.

Daisy Fairfield was fond of her father for his love for her; and I cannot help thinking that it takes a great deal to prevent a child from being fond of a parent. I doubt if anything but absolute and proved un-love will do it, for the fifth commandment is by nature very easy of keeping. He had great schemes for her in his head, and meant to make her an heiress worth a great man's wooing—great of course socially and by right of purse, as such folk

measure greatness. He had but one other child, a son whom he regarded with much contempt and some aversion, as a very weak vessel indeed.

Dick Fairfield had shewed no propensity for making money, but a considerable one for spending it on himself. He had declined to have anything to do with the business, in which he was to have succeeded his father, as Fairfield after Fairfield always did, and as there was no second to fall back upon, "Fairfield" must in another generation be but a *nominis umbra* in the house, where the new partner would reign supreme, under such fetters of Threadneedle's forging as he would submit to. Dick had gone into the army as such men do, not to fight, but to loaf; and his father, finding the business hopeless, had allowed him to do it because of the social consideration he supposed would belong to it. But in starting him he had given him clearly to understand, that as he declined to care for the House of Fairfield, the House of Fairfield would not make an eldest son of him, but that Daisy would have her full share of the goods her father might leave behind him. Dick accepted the condition vacuously, as he did everything, being indeed slow both of heart and of intelligence, and a wonder to everybody in that he

called Daisy sister. Such wonders of kinship are constant, family un-likeness being often more curious to speculate upon than family likeness.

Daisy thoroughly disapproved of Dick; and fully shared her father's feeling that he should have felt it a bounden duty, being the only son, to conquer his tastes, or rather want of them, and stand by the house and the business.

Poor Mrs. Fairfield, of course, could never be brought to see this, which nettled her husband considerably. She thought the army delightful, and the uniform most becoming; and she sympathized deeply with Dick's grievances when, as now, he was relegated to unattractive quarters in an out-of-the-way part of Ireland. He ought to have made a stipulation with the Horse-Guards, when he joined, that he never was to leave London.

Daisy Fairfield, perhaps, did not keenly regret her brother's absence, and for her that Christmas season, which followed on Guy Faucit's plunge into the troubled waters of legal life, was a happy and memorable time. It is a happy, if a restless time, for those of us to whom it is given, that during which the heart's first real fancy takes steady shape and form, and the feeling that "it

may be" deepens into the conviction that "it must," the belief that "it will."

Guy Faucit, with his friends and his introductions, at once found himself welcome in the society I described as Daisy's in a former chapter. He was a man to become an acquisition and a favourite at once; for his Oxford fame had of necessity preceded him to many places in town, where many a man now in advance of him at the bar owned him for tutor and adviser, and looked up to him with unabated reverence.

Good Mrs. Pepperharrow, who was one of the first people on whom he called, killed a fatted calf for him at once, and sent him down to dinner with Daisy. Mrs. Pepperharrow was preternaturally gorgeous, and full of an important move in life which she was going to make. She was about to "take up her hassocks," as a friend of mine describes the progress of migration, and inaugurate a mighty palace in the south-west of London, which she hoped to make a fashionable centre.

"So good of you if you'll come and help me, Mr. Faucit," she said, "with some acting or a little music, or some *tableaux vivans*" (I cannot attempt to reproduce the appearance these two words would assume in the spelling). "I'm sure you're very clever in that way."

"Indeed, Mrs. Pepperharrow, I know nothing at all about them."

"Oh, Mr. Faucit, you can't expect me to believe that. A man of your intellect, who can do anything e likes to do without an effort. Daisy dear, wouldn't Mr. Faucit look well as the Earl of Leicester, with you as Amy what's-her-name, and me as Queen Elizabeth? Then there would be appropriate music beind the scenes, and a good supper down-stairs. Mr. Faucit, you really must promise me to do the Earl of Leicester."

"The Earl of Leicester, Mrs. Pepperharrow," said Daisy, "was slight and delicate and romantic; and you will have to starve Mr. Faucit down, which I am sure isn't at all in your way. And I'm sure I don't look a bit like that spiritless Amy Robsart."

"No, indeed," said her neighbour, in a low voice. "Flora MacIvor, or Minna in the 'Pirate,' would be more the line of part to fall to you."

"Are you to be the desperate Cleveland, then?"

"*Absit omen!*" muttered Guy in a low voice.

"Which means?" asked Daisy, half hearing.

"Which means that I was quoting Latin at dinner, which is atrocious; I should have been sconced for it

at Oxford. I wonder, Miss Fairfield, if such an inveterate old don as I must be by this time will ever be civilized up to London level?"

"We shall all try what is to be done with you. Mrs. Pepperharrow, do you think we can ever make a London man of Mr. Faucit?"

"My dear, I'm surprised to hear you. I'm sure Mr. Faucit would be what he liked anywhere; though whether we ave to be different in Belgrave Square from what we are in Portland Place, I'm afraid I don't know. I've heard that you ave, and I wonder how it's done."

"What makes you change from such comfortable quarters as these?" asked Faucit.

"My usband Ugh as made a great it," said the lady, rushing at the sentence gallantly and losing every fence. (She generally saved some.) "I'm sure we were rich enough before, and very thankful we ought to be, when there's so many poor people about, and so hard to know what to do for them."

"Nobody knows better what to do in that way than Mrs. Pepperharrow," said Daisy, looking very kindly on her friend.

"Well, I know that I try, my dear. And, Mr. Faucit, the poor are very hard to manage sometimes,

and do take one in so. I wonder if they're any better in Belgrave Square."

"Are you going there on a voyage of discovery?"

"We're going there because Ugh as more than doubled all his money this year, and is likely to go on making more and more of it now e's once begun. And I think we ought to do our duty in the states to which we are called, and to see more of the aristocracy. Not," added Mrs. Pepperharrow, hurriedly, "that we're going to neglect old friends. Neither Ugh nor me would do that. Oh dear me! Ugh's going to sleep; look at him nodding at the other end of the table, and Mrs. MacGunter not attending to him because of the canvass-backed ducks. Ugh, dear—ahem" (with knife and fork accompaniments on the table). "Ugh!"

The soap-boiler recovered with a start, and poured some wine into Mrs. MacGunter's plate.

"You'll come and see us very often in the new ouse, Mr. Faucit," continued the speaker, having recovered the interruption; "and as for Daisy here, I'm going to take her to all the best places and all the best things of next year's season."

"And make a fine lady of her?" said Faucit. "Painting the lily and gilding the gold."

He spoke rather low.

"Mr. Faucit!" said Daisy as low. "You don't generally pay *banal* compliments."

"I don't think I ever do," he answered. "I was quite in earnest. I cannot see Miss Fairfield in the character of a fine lady."

"Thank you," she said, laughingly. "Perhaps I can. Why should you think that I am free from the ambitions and the weaknesses of my sex?"

"From what I have heard of it, the society craze is neither an ambition nor a weakness. It is a fever, apt to leave the whole system in an unstrung and exhausted condition."

So the talk glided on into the usual philosophies about the emptiness of fashionable life and the hollowness of society, which came of course with tremendous force from these two experienced young moralists. It is astonishing how, in London, that same hollow cavity is proclaimed and proscribed by the flutterers on the edge, who hasten to tumble into it one after another on the first appearance of an opening.

Guy and Daisy were not near enough to the mouth yet, so they were free to talk with a grave superiority which impressed Mrs. Pepperharrow but little, as far as

she heard their conversation, carried on, it must be confessed, in something of an undertone.

Have I spoken of Daisy Fairfield's voice? Guy's eyes were sometimes half-shut as he listened, to dwell on the music of the notes. His hostess was on a more fashionable life intent, and undismayed by the auguries of good-natured friends as to the snubbings she might have to bear. She relied upon her Hugh's purse, and her own placid persistency of nature, which, combined with the fact that you might as well be rude to a cushion, had served her in good stead in the battle of life. They had begun at the bottom of the scale, she and her husband, and had loved and comforted each other in their honest way throughout. If such people do set their hearts upon social conquests, they do it so innocently and thoroughly that there is no blaming them, and perhaps they win because they deserve it.

The Pepperharrows' wealth made very many people happy; and in the hands of such trustees as they, it is apt to increase fast. Fortune, indeed, seemed bent at this time upon showering the favours they most desired upon them.

Early in the year, just as the big house in Belgrave

Square was being prepared for the opening of the season, it fell to the lot of Alderman Hugh Pepperharrow to preside over some ceremony in the city which was graced by the presence of royalty, and carried with it some special significance deserving of special commemoration. Within a few days, to his wife's undisguised and pronounced delight, and with the effect of some shame-facedness on his part, veiling much inward satisfaction, the soap-boiler arose Sir Hugh Pepperharrow from under the gracious hand of his sovereign. And it was under such a smiling fortune as this that the 'Peep-Hole' and the 'Flunkey,' and other organs of the fashionable world, previously primed in the matter, announced beforehand some of the wonders which were to await the *élite* of the *beau monde* in the *salons* of the popular lady of an excellent knight. On such matters we always write in reverential, if sometimes doubtful, French. Even at the same time that fickle and dangerous goddess of the wheel was, alas! steering for a lea-shore, and bringing gathering rumours in her wake, the older vessel of Fairfield and Co.

CHAPTER X.

COMING EVENTS.

No rumours about the house of Fairfield or its fortunes reached the ears of the student in the Temple; nor did Daisy in Portland Place suspect any reason whatever for her father's increased irritabilities. He growled and glared more than before, and he visibly increased his allowances both of port wine and brandy-and-water, much to the girl's annoyance and distress. She had seen the effect of too much indulgence in these luxuries upon him too often not to hold them in profound horror, and she had very often been able to prevail on him to mend his ways by judicious remonstrance.

Mrs. Fairfield had an unfortunate knack of interfering at exactly the wrong time, and in exactly the wrong way, and returning weakly to the charge when

wisdom lay in silence. People like this poor lady are always doing it—unlucky social martyrs, who are quite undeserving of the cruel process of snubbing, very incapable of bearing it, and yet always to a great extent bringing it on themselves.

The effect of Mrs. Fairfield's mild but pertinacious words was usually to increase the evil; but with his daughter Mr. Fairfield had the grace to be ashamed of himself and of his bad tempers, when they outgrew the reasonable crossness which is permitted to every right-minded head of a household, in order to signify that he is Sir Oracle, and wants the barking to himself. Under the crooked influence of the bottle the crossness sometimes broke bounds considerably, and took ferocious forms which Mr. Fairfield had forgotten all about the next morning, till his wife began to narrate them in a suffering tone when he woke, making him swear.

Daisy would say nothing till long afterwards, when some quiet and perfectly good-tempered allusion, lighted up sometimes by some of the humour which had been rather freely bestowed upon this young lady, made papa feel very uncomfortable and very conscious, and grow quite good for a time. If some of the guardian angels would only learn her method, and

refrain from triumphing over prostrate guilt at times when forbearance is not only mercy but wisdom, conversions would be more numerous, and there would be less creaking in the domestic wheel.

But of what am I discoursing? Is it possible that well-bred young ladies can even be conscious of aberrations of this class, much more take notice of their existence? Faith, yes; coffee-taverns and Sir Wilfrid were in their infancy then; and, indeed, I doubt if good Father Noah's weakness is yet dead amongst us, and perhaps there are a good many houses, if we unroofed them, where the properest young maidens would be found very well used to the sins of fathers or brothers in this matter, and speaking of them and rebuking them very candidly indeed.

Daisy Fairfield, certainly, had a way of going right to her mark about everything, and her mind and taste, at this period, were making rapid growth under the influence of Guy's companionship. Sadly indeed, and very gravely, did she note how this failing of her father's was growing upon him now. He was not a drunkard, nor did he often exceed the extreme limits imposed by decorum. But he drank too regularly and too much, and it was a vice that did not suit him.

He was not one of those genial fellows who break up homes and hearts with the most exhilarating signs of good-temper; for when he had well drunk, Septimus Fairfield was not genial. If he had been less prone to the weakness for many years past, Daisy and his wife might have been more ready to suspect that he had something on his mind. As it was, they thought with perturbed spirits of the facile descent of Avernus, and hoped that the old gentleman would yet mend his ways.

If it had not been for this little rift within the lute, my favourite's enjoyment of this winter would have been perfect. Day after day, and time after time, the intimacy between her and Guy Faucit grew and prospered, and I think they understood each other very well, with that best of understandings which comes about between two loyal hearts like theirs, as the inevitable stream proceeds upon its course. He learned how to assure her of his meaning without definite words; to convey to her, by many a pleasant intimation which she would live upon for days, the depth of the purpose and the reality of the love that were in him; and at the same time to make her see why and how he did not care to come forward to her father empty-

handed, but waited for the not far-off time, when, as he hoped, he might have something like a secure home and a definite future to offer.

When first she realized this, it may be that her hero rose higher than before in her esteem, and that she, too, on her side, vowed in that simple maiden heart of hers that she, if so God would, was ready to wait in a quiet confidence for the moment when he might think himself justified in saying all that was in his heart. She made no concealment from herself of the answer which hers was prepared to give him.

There was no hurry. She was young, and the battered old world was young too for her; young enough to give her the full enjoyment of itself, its friendships and its pleasures, its allurements and its innocent uses, which the sceptics only sneer at when they have employed them badly.

When they met at the winter dances, the delight of the evening was in her waltzes and her talks with him; but that did not prevent her from dancing through her card with partners many and various, getting out of them all the good they had to give her, and grudging to him no little of the same kind of enjoyment. A pleasant look of understanding would pass between

them at such times now and again, and the whole of their love-story was coloured by the radiance of a perfect trust.

I myself, who made her acquaintance through Guy at this time, was favoured with a good many dances and conversations with her, and thought that I could have wished no better fortune in the world for the friend for whom nothing seemed to me too good, than the companionship, through all change and chance, of such a rare creature as this.

She was so wonderfully frank and fearless, spoke of Guy with such unconcealed but modest interest, and interested herself so honestly in his friends, just because he had made them his.

She learned to laugh at me and with me for my avowed incapacity for legal learning, sympathized thoroughly with my hopeless predilections for the side of the world which men have agreed to call Bohemia—though what the word precisely means, and what are its latitudes and longitudes, the social geography book sayeth not in any plain terms—and comforted me when, as sometimes happened, I felt inclined to cry out on my own un-seriousness, by auguring for me a fair measure of success in the irregular pursuits which it

was my bent to follow, wherein one may stray without a licence, and work in the morning, or in the middle of the night, or all day, or not at all, as seemeth the unchartered libertine best in his own eyes.

Never had woman a happier knack of talking just upon the subjects which most interest the person she is talking to, not from any sense of duty, or with any sign of that detestable process known as "pumping," but because she knew that men are best on their own ground, and she loved to pluck from all the highways and hedges of human nature the very flowers which grew there the most naturally.

So it was that Wilmot came to the conclusion that there could never be a barrister's wife like that; while I, though quite agreeing with him in the name and interests of Faucit, secretly felt that Daisy Fairfield was born to share and to console the lot of a literary man, and that after all it was to be hoped that the tyrant Circumstance would end by dispensing that lot to Guy, who had already shown his capacity to accept it.

Indeed, my chief despair about my own prospects rose out of that capacity of his. Every article he wrote for the 'Saturday,' or for the magazine with which he was for the time connected, teemed with

an amount of knowledge and information which seemed helplessly beyond my grasp. I wanted to be well-informed; but it was all in vain. I was baffled by politics, bemused by science, drugged by history, while law drove me frenzied to the nearest oyster-shop.

I was incurably and conscientiously frivolous, and read my fate in the pitying glances of my friends, and the light subjects on which alone they would discourse with me.

I used to think of my future gloomily—to see myself a pauper, a tide-waiter, a wanderer living on my poor private means, and might never have found my destiny at all had I not one day chanced upon a French farce which amused me. I then and there wrote an original play (upon the same subject), and my groove was found.

We have all our grooves, my brethren, I verily believe, if we will but with patience wait for them. I have cited Sir Benjamin Brodie's dictum because Faucit believed in it. I didn't, and I don't. No power on earth—none—would, as I am convinced, have made me like or tolerate the law, through no fault of mine, who did not make myself. Neither could the good Fairy Bountiful herself make me hum "God save

the Queen" so as to be recognized even by Her Gracious Majesty, often as she must have heard it, and on innumerable keys—even though, like Bully Bottom, I have a "reasonable good ear for music. Let's have the tongs and the bones."

I liked Daisy Fairfield heartily, just as I liked Faucit, and for the same personal reasons, which are at the bottom of all our real likings and dislikings. I abominate Jones because he doesn't appear to want my company at the club; when one day, lo, we meet in the coffee-room, he greets me warmly and we have a pleasant talk about nothing in particular, and thenceforward Jones is in my best books. Good fellow, Jones. Probably a precisely similar process has taken place in Jones's mind about me, and he has been cursing me for a stuck-up beggar, when I have been avoiding him because I thought he didn't care to speak to me. Faucit, no doubt, used to abuse me, in the round unvarnished terms of college youth, for not sticking to anything; but when the Dean of Chapel of our joint undergraduate day augured worst of me, and the master couldn't account for my proceedings except on the assumption of some mysterious deficiency in my brain—it was Dr. Phlebotham, I think, who once upon

a time, trying to "reduce" me, said the cerebrum was possessed of too much white matter, and too little grey, or blue, or something—Faucit fought my battles in confidence, and vowed to them that Balbus would do very well for himself some day. The Dean hoped that I should; but my last essay upon the Theocritean philosophy had been something altogether too superficial for Balliol. I had insisted on treating that writer purely as a poet, "the poet of the Bucolics, a Syracusan by race, and the son of Simichides, as he said himself," and had more than inferred that he had no philosophy at all, and would have had as little to say for himself in that way as the needy knife-grinder.

Poor old Dean Parley! worthier and kinder soul never breathed; but he measured us all in the selfsame teaspoon, and his classical curriculum was as the bed of one Procrustes, ordered to suit all lengths.

Of the brilliant minds and leaders of my college day, who were going to ignite the Thames, and witch the world with noble workmanship, only one or two have struggled to the front at all in the many-marshalled battle of Life, and those who now live and move in the eyes of men were for the most part but a poor sort of creature, ranked with the drones and pricked with the

unworthy. Nimmo, the billiard-player, has made one of the finest fortunes of the day by coup after coup in Roumanian railways and Mexican contracts, wrought through energy of purpose and subtlety of brain; Scourfield, the thrice-rusticated, who would do nothing but hunt, is known through the wide-world as a fighting special correspondent, whose rides and escapes astonish the generals as much as his letters delight the penmen; Mopus the solitary, who seemed to have neither foe nor friend nor occupation, and neither in books nor sports would ever do anything, is the famous poet of many editions; while Sternhold of the four first classes makes indexes in Lincoln's Inn to the statutes other men draw up; and the wondrous Impey, the distinguished Ireland, Hertford, and what not? who even in those days was too well-informed to believe in anything but himself, is incapable of making a speech, or saying Bo to a British jury; but devils unbeknown for the Solicitor-General, and saves him, as that officer confesses, a considerable amount of trouble. The wheel goes round, and the little pitchers crop up. There was not enough allowance made for mental varieties in those college days, and too much of pains taken in picking out the plums. It happens sometimes that

the batter is good, and the plums are naught. Ever and again, though, the great stamp of true and original power asserts itself at the outset to all eyes; and neither tutors nor rowing men—neither friends nor examiners—were even then mistaken in their gauge of Faucit's capacity. Hard and sad enough was the discipline the Dispenser had in store for him; but as I write and remember, may discipline and Dispenser be thanked, it is bearing its late fruit now.

I was much with Faucit at that time, and made number four with his sweetheart and himself in more private boxes than one, contenting myself with the task of absorbing Mrs. Pepperharrow, whose conversation and character rewarded me thoroughly for my devotion, being to me a source of never-ending delight. Whether she attached any meaning or seriousness to the romance unfolding itself before her eyes, I am not sure. But such was her confidence in Daisy, that whatever that young lady did was sure to be right for her good-natured guardian, who made Daisy a prominent figure in all the mind-pictures she drew of the ouse in Belgrave Square.

"Quite a mansion, I assure you; and so elegant. I am sure if we might ope for anything from your pen

for our first performance in the theatre, it would be sure to be a feature, Mr. Balbus. A man of your intellect, you know. But I'm afraid you wouldn't have the time."

I had just followed up the fatal farce with a melodrama, also of French origin, on the strength of which, not without some inward spasms, I called myself an author. It is the only line of life I wot of in which a translator takes to himself that privilege. Yet do the sins of the adapter recoil upon his own head, for there is a general impression abroad, both in the public mind and the managerial, that an English playwright cannot invent his own plots. Why I don't know, as it is the easiest part of the business, which may be fairly inferred from the number of novels which every year provides. The impression has chrystallized into a maxim, however; and it is proved by the simple process of attributing a French origin to all the plots one does invent. So it falleth out that in consequence of the sins of his fathers, and mayhap of his own youth, the British dramatist has a hard time of it. He is always told that he cannot invent his own plots; and when he does, he is told that they are not his own.

Not long ago I assured a friend of the absolute

originality of a story of mine which had just had some success upon the stage; and he asserted it on my authority at a dinner of some gentlemen "in society" a night or two afterwards. The assertion, he told me, was met with roars of laughter, and the assurance from one of the guests that he knew the dialogue by heart and could repeat it in the original French!

Pleasant, truthful creature! "In less than a week there were some people who could name the father, and the farm-house where the babies were put to nurse." What can be the secret pleasure, I wonder, of railing by precept and detracting by rule?

But what am I, that I should keep Mrs. Pepper-harrow waiting upon my wrongs? Her honest mind was troubled with no misgivings about degrees of authorship; and she recognized in me one of those mystic beings at whose shrine she bowed under the generic name of genius. Large and catholic was her interpretation of that word. Muggins, the eminent amateur actor, whose powers of facial expression (grimacial expression Jem Gosling once christened it) distanced J. S. Clarke in his most india-rubber mood; Josephine Parrott, the eminent *tragédienne*, who learnt all her parts after the fashion of Pendennis's friend,

Miss Fotheringay, and concealed a world of emotion in those beautiful eyes so effectually that it never got out of them; Binks, the successful manager, who did such wonderful things for art that the great upholstering firm of Shaddy and Co. made quite an income out of him (his plays he bought in Paris, but encouraged native art by insisting that all the characters should be called by English names, and that new English repartees should be written for them, thereby proving his respect for the French author's work, and how little that author knew what was good for him)—the drawing-room comic singer of the hour, whose name is immaterial, for he is always the same; Balbus the dramatist; Faucit the scholar and Saturday Reviewer; Mr. Millais, the Bishop of Winchester, and Mr. Gladstone, were all welcome to the routs of Lady Pepperharrow that was to be as representatives of Genius.

She was an honest, kindly, and admiring soul; and small idea enough had she of the consequences which were to follow, when she took Daisy Fairfield under her affectionate wing. She had no daughters of her own; only two or three sons, who had taken to country-pursuits, and were but little at home, eschewing the society which their mother so loved. So Daisy

filled a void in her life, and willingly gave the time she could spare from the duties of her own home to the service of her friend. Faucit's polite attention during the winter charmed the old lady, who made him exceedingly welcome, and gave opportunities many and various for meetings whose significance would scarcely have escaped the keen eye of Fairfield papa, and would very little have pleased him. But for the preoccupations which were growing upon him at this time, he might have scented danger even as things were. But he was revolving schemes of his own for Daisy in his own mind, with as small thought of her as the slave-dealer has of the feelings of his plumpest Circassian.

Kind Mrs. Fairfield had inklings of her own on the matter, for Faucit rallied to the five o'clock urn not unfrequently, and one day she hinted something of her thoughts to her daughter, who met them with a very becoming blush, a little laugh, and a kiss. Daisy was very happy in her simple paradise. Fearless of the man she loved, and undoubting of herself, as she would be fearless and undoubting if ever the day should come when she might seal at the altar the compact already firm and fast in her inmost heart, she went on her way

rejoicing, and adding day by day more splendours and more adornments to her castle in the air.

> "O, but she would love him truly;
> He should have a cheerful home;
> She would order all things duly,
> When beneath his roof they come."

Daisy Fairfield was modestly conscious of a heart and mind beyond the average of every-day women; and she knew the rich gifts of love and help that she could bring in her hand to the man she could accept as worthy of them. Young as she was, she had attracted admiration enough to turn a light head lightly; but she had formed her ideal from the first, and her ideal protected her till it came in living form, and a very attractive living form too. She recognized in Faucit's nature the complement and magnet of her own. She had the artist's eye to admire his physical manliness, and the woman's perception to read his steady truthfulness of character, and the perfect simplicity with which, conscious on his side of his own superiority to most of the men surrounding him, he referred it without doubt or question to the source whence he believed it came, and read the lesson of humility so—as it was meant to be read—as so few will deign to read it.

That it was his business to do his best with the talents intrusted him, be their number five or ten, or as he expressed it himself, to "stick his nails into the work that came to him to do," was a conviction with which all Daisy's nature sympathized. And it was the opinion of the chronicler of these events, as he watched and protected his two favourites as best he might, flirted with Mrs. Pepperharrow in a manner to endanger the soap-boiler's rest, and regarded Fairfield's papa with a suspicious and unaccommodating eye, that Nature never found a pair more nobly fitted to fill a royal space in a rather commonplace world together.

CHAPTER XI.

MY LORD AND MY LADY.

It was the Baroness Luscombe of Lusmere who kindly undertook to issue the invitations for the opening festivity at the new house in Belgrave Square, about which the 'Peep-Hole' and the 'Flunkey' had been busied with starry paragraphs for weeks before.

The blushing honours of the soap-boiler's knighthood were brand-new upon him; for it was in the February of the winter of which I have been writing that his sovereign singled him out of the mistered herd, and gave him antlers in the shape of the *manche à son nom*, which was so impressive to Sir Barnes Newcome, the banker.

In the ensuing month of March, when the sun even in London was pitilessly clear, just out of perversity, and because the east wind was so pitilessly

cold, Lady Pepperharrow welcomed all the world and his wife to Glycerine House, Belgrave Square, to the first of the festivities with which the name of that hospitable mansion was to become eternally connected. It was unfortunate that it was Lent, certainly; for the hostess would gladly have respected every prejudice and every feeling under the sun; but it could not be helped; and this comparatively quiet season had its advantages, for a beginner in the field of fashion, over the later months, when dates are all filled up, and the fixed stars of the social firmament reign supreme.

Lady Pepperharrow was at present but a comet with a good deal of tail, so she took the advice of Lady Luscombe, and of that distinguished authority Lord Pentonville, to whom Lady Luscombe introduced her, and compromised with worldliness with a sigh. Nor did the good lady surrender her ancient prejudices without the knowledge and sanction of the Rev. Mr. Birmingham Pope, the favourite minister of her new district. She had frankly consulted him, on her coming, upon the poor of his neighbourhood, and what help she best could give him in his work, and fairly astonished him by the roundness of the cheque with which she presented him. He quite stammered his acknow-

ledgments, and owned that from the wealthiest neighbourhood in London he did not get quite so much help in that way as he could wish; for indeed, whatever his social proclivities and concessions to mammon, Mr. Pope was a man who did a great deal of good from the incomings of his church, and would gladly have done more.

"The subscriptions I must own, Lady Pepperharrow, are not what I could wish. But above all things we should be charitable; and I know that the members of my congregation have calls and duties in the country which conflict with their opportunities here. An open hand like your ladyship's will be a blessing not to be over-estimated."

Mr. Pope delighted Lady Pepperharrow, and was installed as her confessor in ordinary without loss of time. He was consulted about the great house-warming—if a word so ordinary may be applied to an event of such magnitude,—and while respecting the lady's hesitations he fully endorsed the opinions of her secular advisers in the matter. Lady Luscombe herself, he assured her, was a very particular person, and would only advise a great entertainment like this in Lent under exceptional circumstances. Lady Luscombe was

no doubt quite justified in considering the circumstances exceptional, and there was now-a-days a decided advance in the liberality of public opinion upon these matters, which he himself could not but regard as a healthy tendency, if not carried too far. Those who still cherished scruples on the point would consult their own feeling in staying away; but he was far from thinking that, with proper safeguards, pleasant and general social intercourse was not in itself both lawful and commendable at all periods of the year.

If Lady Pepperharrow had further doubts, they were banished by Daisy Fairfield's straightforward intimation, that she could see no conceivable harm in her friend giving a party in Lent if her friend liked, and it was more convenient than any other time. As Daisy's ways and opinions of thinking were always very simply in earnest, her verdict in the matter, as on most matters about which Lady Pepperharrow consulted her, was accepted as final.

Lady Luscombe was the first high step in her humbler sister's social ladder. The Lord Viscount Luscombe, gouty and aristocratic almost beyond the permitted limits of aristocracy and gout, passed his days in the fond delusion that he was a Liberal of

the modern advanced school. He was a country gentleman of olden family and good though moderate fortune, who, determining to devote his abilities to the service of his country, was as a series of matters of course elected member for the county division, early introduced to the lesser loaves and fishes of official life, and by steady gradations developed into a Secretary of State.

When the Liberal Ministry of 18— was formed, it was in all quarters felt that Mr. Fulke Vavasour was entitled to a post in the cabinet, from the eternal order of the proprieties. No better reason could be advanced or was suggested. In that position he was found by some of his colleagues, upon trial, to be so eminently and entirely respectable, that upon a reconstruction of the ministry he was translated to the House of Lords, without office, it being thought and indeed stated that his independent support in that position would be of the highest value to the government.

Wilkins, the advanced member for Radborough, accepted the vacant portfolio. It was early in the session which followed upon these events that a measure was inadvertently suffered to pass the House of Commons, which was rightly regarded in well-informed

quarters as a serious menace to the existing social system; and the House of Lords, with the pronounced interest in political matters, and the unselfish patriotism which distinguishes them as a body, rose to the occasion. They were assembled in London in numbers quite unusual for the season of the year.

Lord Luscombe, whose independent support was the implied condition of his peerage, could not be expected to give it against his conscience, and both spoke and voted the other way. He afterwards wrote to the 'Times' in vindication of his principles and action, and the letter was very much admired. A yet more extraordinary result of the political crisis, and a more convincing proof of the keen political insight and anxiety for the public weal which is the true basis of the sturdy English character, was the fact that a whole army of Peers, many of them unknown by name to the more ignorant sections of the public, left their hunting-boxes and their country-houses, and their winter watering-places in the Capuan South, to rally round the throne and the constitution. They did not listen to the arguments on the other side, for they knew the value of time; but voted with the unanimity of the players in the 'Critic,' and saved the country. Some

of them, it was even whispered, were so much in earnest that they had never been inside the House before, and couldn't find their way.

The 'Peep-Hole' recorded the arrival of the Earl of Deadhead at Claridge's, from his villa on the Mediterranean; while the 'Flunkey,' in this respect beforehand with all rivals, announced that Lord Pentonville, who had been staying with some distinguished friends in the neighbourhood of Newmarket, had taken up his quarters at his bachelor residence in Mount Street, Grosvenor Square. Even those inseparable friends, the Duke of Surbiton and the Marquis of Norbiton, were visible in London. The great heart of the country, no doubt about it, was thoroughly stirred.

So much the better for our friend Lady Pepperharrow. These throbs of the country's heart sensibly quickened the circulation in her drawing-rooms, in the exceptional pre-Paschal season which resulted from the political crisis. Lord Luscombe, who was very much respected in the city, and had many mysterious things to do with odd and sundry Boards, had, in the course of his financial operations, made acquaintance with Mr. Pepperharrow, and thereout, it must be admitted, sucked no small advantage. He had been put up to

a good thing in connection with the *coup*, which established the soap-boiler's fortune on such a solid basis; and it was whispered that he was the first cause of the claims of that gentleman to social recognition being brought to the notice of H. M.'s advisers in such matters. And learning from Sir Hugh Pepperharrow the nature of the "buffets and rewards"—for I am told that in such things the two go hand in hand—on which his better half had set her heart, his lordship shewed himself not ungrateful. He called upon the lady and dined with her, in his wife's absence from town, at Luscombe Abbey; and gave her matter of conversation with her friends and intimates for a long time after, until lords and ladies grew as plentiful with her as peas in June.

During many of those parties of four of which I have spoken, I heard of nothing but Lord Luscombe's merits, while the other two, pleasantly and entirely unmindful of such subjects of talk, were straying together in fields and byways of their own. And Lady Pepperharrow having confided to his lordship her wishes and ambitions about the opening of the house in Belgrave Square, Lord Luscombe in a gallant moment undertook that his wife should be her sponsor.

Lady Luscombe was not especially pleased when she heard of the task assigned her. Certainly a greater difference of style and externals between two women could not well be imagined than between her and the lady given her as a *protégée.* Marian Fulke Vavasour was barely twenty when she made her appearance in London life under that name, as the young wife of the rising statesman, thirty years older than herself. For at fifty Mr. Fulke Vavasour was still rising; and he might never perhaps have attained to his highest altitudes but for the rare gift which pertained to his wife. As the French say so neatly of a characteristic which once, at all events, belonged signally to French-women, *elle savait tenir son selon.* The cold and somewhat fishy, but observant eye of the county-member had detected this gift in her, when he met her at her father's table in his voyage round his constituency. He found in her exactly what he wanted: good family and undeniable connexion; no fortune, which would make her dependent; much ambition, which would make her helpful; and an appearance and manner which must make his house and table infinitely attractive to the class of people he wished to attract. For his, too, was a genuine parliamentary

ambition, of the kind which has furnished so many officials of a uniform and serviceable type. He had a steady plodding brain, with no heart to distract it; no domestic affections, and no taste for pleasure whatever, though he shot his covers solemnly every year in a pair of characteristic gaiters, and never enjoyed the sport so much as when the game was shy, and he could talk blue-book over his gun to some congenial spirit, invited to Luscombe Abbey for that especial purpose. He worked as hard as any clerk in his office; some sceptics indeed, conversant with the ways of those gentlemen, said a good deal harder. Therefore Mr. Fulke Vavasour was a man who deserved to rise.

In the civil contract entered into between him, bachelor, of the one part, and Marian Teesdale, spinster, of the other part, and attested with certain mutual but unbinding affirmations in the accredited clerical formulas, there was no disguise or pretence upon either side. The lady was weary of the refined and pretentious poverty in which she had been brought up from her cradle, and the never-ending bickerings which made her home a picture of small discomfort; and was quite ready to marry Mr. Fulke Vavasour for his lands and his position, provided he fully understood that it was

for them she did it. For she was straightforward enough in her way. She knew, and she let him know, that in her opinion she fetched her price, with her good looks and youth and breeding, and the wits and accomplishments which she had quietly and sedulously cultivated, to fit herself for the place she had always intended to fill. Mr. Vavasour was just what she wanted. He might have been ten years younger; anything younger than that she did not wish for, for she liked what was *posé*. But as it was it was well enough. So too his fortune might have been larger, in comparison with the growing extent of fortunes now-a-days. But it was good and solid, and would serve; and with a name and position such as his, there were ways and opportunities of increasing it by wariness and venture properly combined.

To Marian Teesdale, to do her justice, money was a means as much as an end, for she wanted to lead, and she could not do that through money alone. Before she attracted Mr. Vavasour she had steadily, and two or three times, refused a prosperous manufacturer of half his years and treble his fortune, who was a very presentable man, and very honestly in love with her. She saw at once that she could do nothing with him except

possibly conquer for him the position of a *nouveau riche*, which to her meant no position at all. She had drunk in the bluest traditions of race with her mother's milk (or rather with her foster-mother's, who was a farmer's daughter,—It is odd, but so . .), and was honestly and scornfully surprised to see how "her mother did fret and her father did fume," at her determined rejection of Mr. Thomas Hodges' proposals.

Poor people! their narrow means, and, of course, large family, had half harried them to death, though all that interest could do had been done for all the little male Teesdales. Unluckily that is not much now-a-days, in cases where idleness chooses to graft confirmed incapacity upon original want of brain. Competitive examinations were almost as great a bugbear to poor Mrs. Teesdale, and as much the object of her denunciations, as "them dratted schoolboards" are at this present time to the casual farmer's wife we meet in the railway-carriage. And indeed there had been more plucking of little Teesdales in these merciless ordeals than the Mother Goose could comfortably bear. The parents may perhaps be pardoned even by the sternest moralist, then, if it was with pronounced regret, and after considerable argument, that they let the manufacturer's fortune go. Marian

had a bad time of it when he returned again and again to the charge; but she held her own very calmly. The parents implored in the name of her brethren, who were as many as Joseph's; and she frankly answered that, though she would do what she could for them if she could do it some day in her own way, she held their interests altogether secondary to her own, and as they didn't seem to be able to do anything for themselves, she couldn't honestly feel that she cared two straws what became of them. She retorted very justly, and therefore all the more provokingly, upon her father all the continual variations of *noblesse oblige,* with which he had played upon her from childhood; and the hapless man felt that it was difficult to make Theory square with Practise, when the latter took such very substantial form. I think, on the whole, that it was hard upon him. However, so it was; and matters took their own way, which, after all, thanks to the young lady's tenacity of purpose, turned out eventually much to his satisfaction. Mr. and Mrs. Teesdale, to do them justice also according to their lights, much preferred Mrs. Fulke Vavasour that was, to Mrs. Thomas Hodges that should have been, and magnanimously forgave her at the altar to which she conducted them.

The common moralizing about the bargain and sale of children in this country of ours has always struck the present chronicler, at all events, as a good deal exaggerated. The sweet young victims, in nine of these convenient marriages out of ten, sacrifice themselves with a good grace and much of their own accord. Negatively, no doubt, parents may have brought them up to the theory of the thing, and may so far be gravely responsible for the evils which follow in its train. But often and often, I believe, if the reverse of the medal could be read, which carries the pithy motto instead of the stamp, we might learn that some of these wicked parents, with their lives half lived and all laid down, with many a stray example and moral in their minds,—sometimes, perhaps, their own among the number,—are not even willing participators in some of the ceremonies of St. George's; have even warned and besought a headstrong child in vain. She knows better; life is before her, and with the watchfulness that she will exercise, and the experience by which she will profit, will yield for her fruits they were not able to gather. It is all very well for papa and mamma to deny that happiness can reside in carriages and horses, and dresses and jewels unlimited. She and her friend

Clara have talked it all over and thought it all out, and for them they know that it does. So the fair Iphigenia cuts her own throat at the altar smilingly, and Father Agamemnon, so far from lending a hand to the sacrifice, turns his head away and covers his eyes, even if he does sanction the affair with his presence. Are not these things sometimes so?

Marian Gresham Teesdale on her side, and John Audley Fulke Vavasour on his, knew very well what they were about. She assured him very honestly that in this case there was no penniless but cherished suitor in the background; but that she liked her chosen husband as well as anybody, and sympathized in his pursuits and his ambition. In a very short time the marriage bore its purposed fruit. A self-possessed and admirable hostess, whose conversation was sensible and brilliant both, and tact and courtesy unfailing, Mrs. Fulke Vavasour soon made her rooms and receptions a fact in London life; not in its social phase only, but in its political. All the leaders and supporters of their own party found Lusmere House a centre; though, by a careful exercise of that same admirable quality of tact, the hostess succeeded in the most difficult of all tasks, preventing it from becoming too exclusively a

party-centre. A pleasant leaven of opposition gave lustre and interest to the whole; while to art and literature, in the persons of their more famous and favoured sons, Mrs. Fulke Vavasour held out open arms. Nor, while contriving that all this should be, did she neglect the other task she had set herself—that of improving and enlarging her husband's fortune. She made quiet and keen inquiries into the mysteries of city life; to her it was in the first place owing that her husband became, as we have described here, interested in City matters; the state of trade and of railways, under careful and secret guidance, became to her a thing of familiar knowledge; she was careful that nothing unbecoming to, or inconsistent with, Mr. Fulke Vavasour's political position should at any time or in any way be connected with his name; and the Luscombe estates grew and waxed and prospered quietly—so quietly that men hardly marked how the parties at Lusmere House, and the circle at Luscombe Abbey, increased gradually in brilliancy, and in the outward and visible signs of wealth and solidity.

Alas! to what good? Once or twice during the first few years of their union the Fulke Vavasours hoped for a child. But the hopes were disappointed,

and after a time they were not renewed. Barren as it had been loveless, the marriage was denied that blessing which sometimes sows an after-seed of love; and as they grew nearer in interests, Mr. and Mrs. Vavasour grew further apart in heart. They were little together except at the hours and times of ceremony, and a separate circle of private friends grew up round each of them. Long and close were Mr. Vavasour's private interviews with his wife; but if a reporter had been present he would have found them very like a man's visit to his solicitor. Marian was her husband's first man of business, and a good one, and he knew it. In some cases, that is no bad bond of a better union, where wider sympathies agree. But here the lady was bright and intellectual, the gentleman dull and plodding; while to him she was as cold as he. Then out of the dulness and the ploddingness came a great blow to them both, which has been already told. There are times in politics which want strong men, and are apt to put averages to the right-about. Mr. Vavasour's greatest social honour was really his final failure, and they both knew it. They both knew very well why at the age of sixty-two, when many politicians have the world still in their hands, the House of Commons

minister blossomed into the pensioned-off lord. His wife wanted him to refuse; but the intimation that he must not, while very courteous and considerate, was too clear to be mistaken. Mr. Fulke Vavasour was a failure on the post after all, in spite of all his wife had done and all the diplomacies she had used, and the shadows gathered darker round the loveless home.

CHAPTER XII.

LADY PEPPERHARROW'S HOUSE-WARMING.

When Lady Luscombe came to London, at her husband's wish, to preside over Lady Pepperharrow's house-warming, and to play the social godmother to that excellent but inappropriate lady, it was in pursuance of the compact between herself and her husband which both thoroughly understood. Fastidious in taste and choice, the centre and the favourite of her society, and famous as the first of hostesses from one end of polite London to another, Lady Luscombe was not fond of throwing her ægis over unqualified aspirants, or sending out invitations for other people. I am not sure, indeed, that she had ever done such a thing before. But she was sore, and smarting from the recent blow. The Lady Luscombe would never, she felt, be what Mrs. Fulke Vavasour had been; and she

saw the prizes she had toiled and contrived for slipping from her grasp, and the objects for which she lived failing her. She was a woman of ready resource, and was ready for a change of part at once. She knew that her political reign was over. As hostess even in the political world she might yet hold her own in a sense, no doubt; probably the chief regret felt by the heads of the ministry was, that in losing Fulke Vavasour they lost his wife. But it was her husband's position which had given her its weight, and it was gone. When she surveyed her Fulke's sleeping face, to all outward seeming unperturbed by any sense of failure or rebuff, and the open mouth, which had just swallowed a coronet, snoring contentedly on, it is certain that her ladyship felt a weariness, an indignation, and a resentment coming over her which were much at odds with her wifely duties.

Had she nursed him all those years for this? that his abominable stupidity—yes, stupidity—should, after all, have brought their joint career to wreck? It is absolutely on record, that after the catastrophe, on the night when she so gazed upon him, the high-bred Marian then and there, in the silence of the night and the recesses of the bed-curtains, sate bolt upright,

and shook her sleeping lord violently. He never knew till his dying day what was the shock that woke him. It is a fact that these lofty beings have their vulgar passions like other people.

But the first purpose of the lady's life being frustrated, the second remained. Love could scarcely do more for many husbands than ambition did for Fulke Vavasour. I can never bring myself to write of the Right Honourable gentleman as Vavasour without the Fulke. For her husband the keen-witted Marian continued to scheme, almost from habit of thought, perhaps; for, with no son of his or hers succeeding, what had she really to scheme for? But she had resolved on this course at starting, and it was too late to change.

Lord Luscombe could no longer hope to be an influential minister, but he might be made a very rich man, through those City boards and City mysteries I have told of; and the City, instead of Downing Street, now became the metropolis of Lady Luscombe's land of action.

It is not necessary to tell in detail how it was that, as I have already mentioned, the fortunes of Lord Luscombe became connected with those of Sir Hugh Pepperharrow, who had just munificently presented

the City with a strange and fearsome monument (which was carefully set up in the middle of a crowded thoroughfare where there was no room for two cabs to pass before), and was knighted accordingly.

Lord Luscombe and his wife quite understood each other on all matters of business; but when he learned from Pepperharrow, after much hemming and ha-ing on the part of the soap-boiler, what it was that his Martha had set her heart on, and how she desired to accomplish it, his lordship, who had dined with our old friend, was secretly doubtful how his Marian would take it. But the Pepperharrow connection was vital to him at the moment, and he propounded the suggestion, which, to his surprise, was received without cavil.

A few months before, and Marian would have certainly declined to open her house to the Pepperharrows, much more to adopt the lady as a social *protégée.* Lord Luscombe hinted thus much to her, and was puzzled by the tone of covert scorn with which it was answered, that their position in life was changed, and their views and objects must change too. Wealth at any cost, Lady Luscombe explained without definite words, was thenceforward the Luscombe pro-

gramme. So Lady Pepperharrow's guests were bidden to the opening festivity of Glycerine House by the Baroness Luscombe of Lusmere.

Very splendid the west-end mansion looked that night. The mysterious *coup*—I write about a thing which I do not in the least understand, and never shall—had put the Pepperharrows among the financial giants, and everything was worthy of the occasion, when Lady Pepperharrow first put her foot down to trouble the Belgravian waters, and to occupy her large space in the eye of the social journals.

The staircases were bright and sweet with rich exotics which lined all the walls and filled all the recesses like silent and many-coloured chaperons, there to look after the young people with a friendly interest. The lights were softened by judicious shades, and set off the whole scene *a giorno*, as *giorno* should be, clear but not obtrusive. The rooms were furnished with genuine taste, with no pretence of show, but a full sense of richness; there were people who did say that one Daisy Fairfield, the hostess's particular favourite, had been carefully consulted and actively concerned at every stage of the furnishing, and had relentlessly vetoed several appalling combinations of greens and

yellows, and a Pactolic superfluity of gilding, which had at the outset much commended themselves to Lady Pepperharrow's Oriental fancy—and the sofas and settees were an invitation to confidences and treasons.

It was strongly asserted that young Coolington, of the Home Office, never left Milly Swansdown's side the whole evening, in that tiny room which "gives" on the first staircase. There really was no more than space for one couple in it, and it was much in demand. But Coolington and that bold girl held their own in a way which—well, which was very disappointing to other young people with whom they were beforehand. And Milly's eyes always looked so round and simple and surprised, when anybody looked at her as if she had been holding the fort long enough.

The large long room, which was the principal attraction of the house, was filled and busy with the buzz of guests. At one end of it, a perfect bijou stage had been erected as a permanent fixture, under the careful superintendence of Muggins, who had superintended more amateur stages than any man alive; who talked theatre all day, and dreamed it all night, and was wont to salute his friends, at all times and

places, with appropriate quotations from John Maddison Morton—a humourist, by the bye, whose whims and oddities, being confined to the little yellow books which have no connection with literature, have never been half recognized for their spirit of exuberant fun.

The Theatre Royal, Glycerine House, was constructed to serve for every sort of entertainment, from opera to recitation, from *tableau vivant* to scientific lecture, and was opened that night with a miscellaneous concert, in which the stars of the hour, as many of them as had risen in London at that early season, figured and quavered to the equally miscellaneous audience.

Lady Luscombe had done her work well, for everybody was there. Men busy with the affairs of state, whom the poor lady looked upon with a sad eye askance, as they offered their congratulations on her husband's honours with as little of an air of condolence as possible, talked aside in corners of the crisis of the hour; and Society shook its head in the wrong place, and instinctively took the wrong side, as the spirit of the club and the drawing-room in such cases prompteth it. Noble lords mutually congratulated each other on the public spirit which had brought them to town at

such a time, and wondered where Lady Luscombe had picked up her new client, and who she was, as indeed did everybody in the room except the small knot of personal friends whom Lady Pepperharrow would not forget in her invitation, even though they had all to be submitted to the approval of the higher authority.

The world of pure frivolity, the world of dancing and of flirting, were to the fore in force, looking very young and very happy, or else very aging and very bored. Every sort and all sorts, whom Society gathers under her motley wing, came out of curiosity, out of idleness, out of habit, out of love, out of the main chance, out of business, out of any of the thousand-and-one motives which carry people about, night after night, to meet each other over and over again without giving themselves the time to get anything new to say, in the inexplicable whirl which solved perpetual motion long ago, when Mrs. Noah sent out her first invitations for the ark. So good Lady Pepperharrow's rooms, large as they were, were crowded to their full capacity, and she stood gallantly perspiring at her post at the head of the great staircase all the night, till a pitying Duke—it was his Grace of Surbiton—asked her to come and have some of her own supper.

The Marquis of Norbiton had bet him that he would not do it, for the Duke was very young indeed, and had been with difficulty persuaded to leave his hunting-box and come out in the character of a legislator, even by the gravity of the situation, which he confessed he did not fully grasp. But his ancestor had come over with William the Conqueror, and planted the first tree on Messenger's Eyot: so he rose to his duty, and gave his vote in the House of Peers, shoulder to shoulder with Norbiton.

The two young men, who said but little even between themselves upon the subject, agreed thereafter that politics were doosid slow, and abandoned a public career. Indeed, they were scandalously attacked by some low fellows in their local papers, for voting at all, which after their trouble in leaving Leicestershire was doosid ungrateful, and they felt it.

Surbiton and Norbiton were delighted with the Pepperharrow festival, and especially with the magnificent appearance of the hostess, which even Daisy's influence had not been able to keep entirely in check. Some of the patterns, denied to the curtains and chintzes, had surely blossomed out in her attire.

The two young noblemen watched her with a sort

of fascination all the evening. "She'll bob herself into two, Sur, I know she will!"—until the Duke felt impelled to make the recorded bet, and conduct his hostess to supper, an attention for which the poor wearied soul, at the summit of its honest ambition, was unfeignedly grateful.

"I couldn't have done it," Norbiton said to himself gravely, shaking his head as Lady Pepperharrow's feathers fluttered through the door of the supper-room below; "but Sur always has the doose's own way with him."

Thus did these budding rulers of ours beguile the time which they were sacrificing to the labours of the Senate.

It was as one of the hostess's small knot of personal friends that I was included in the gathering I am enabled to describe; and I watched much that was going on with the supercilious envy and contempt of youth, embittered by a deep sense of social wrong and the inequalities of rank.

"Why should we, my dear Faucit,"—I began. But I am bound to say that Faucit, by this time hard at work in a pleader's chambers, and getting more law into his head in a day than most men can digest in a week,

gave no encouragement whatever to my radical sentiments, passed the rights of man lightly over, told me that I should be very glad to be a lord if I could, and sought metal more attractive by a certain young lady's side.

Deserted and snubbed, I turned upon little Binks the manager, who had gotten himself an invitation through his dear friend Muggins, whom he had assisted in contriving the Glycerine stage. He was in a very bad temper, Binks, at the failure of all his plays that season, and profoundly disgusted with the British public.

"Never know where to have 'em, Balbus, never! They won't go to anything but trash, blessed if they will, unless it's Shakespeare, or something else that they go to because their fathers went. And I can't do Shakespeare, confound it! I hate blank verse, because I can't speak it, and you mustn't cut it. If you do it don't scan. As if that mattered! Don't know what to make of the public, blessed if I do!"

"Binks, my boy," I answered, "you are wandering. The abused public are Tom, Dick, and Harry; and as a rule, with but few exceptions, they go to the good things in whatever line, and they won't go to the bad ones. Being human nature in the lump, they cannot well go

wrong. Therefore, Binks, when I find an actor, or an author, or a manager, abusing the British public, I say unto myself, say I, 'Here is a man that knoweth not his own business.' Be modest, Binks, and instead of abusing the British public, try and give them something worth seeing."

"Ha, ha! upon my soul! mean something of your own, Balbus, I suppose. Got something by you you think would suit me?"

"Indeed no," I said. "I don't keep things by me, or make suits of clothes on spec, on the chance of their being made to suit the wearer afterwards. You see authors have to live as well as you, without the advantage of drawing a weekly salary. No, Binks, I have nothing by me; but there are plenty of plays in your drawers which would do very well, I'll be bound!"

"Bosh, sir, bosh! all bosh from beginning to end. Englishmen can't write plays, and those who can won't unless we order 'em. Vanity of authors quite awful—quite disgusting—'pon my soul."

"Vanity, my dear Binks," I answered, "has been described as meaning a conviction that you can do things which you can't do, and are not your business. Now, when I bring a play of mine to rehearsal, the first

thing you actors do is to come round me in a body, or one by one, tell me that this ought to be cut out and that altered, and at last so daze me, that if I don't stand out the play is soon no longer my own. In other words, you insist on teaching me my business instead of doing yours, which is either acting my play or letting it alone. I only ask to be allowed to know my business. I don't teach you to act, though the Lord knows some of you want it. On which side is the vanity, Binks?"

"All nonsense!" said the manager. "Of course we must know all about plays, and you can't. I've tried everything this season—all the pieces which have been the greatest goes abroad. Had one from the German, one from the French, one from the Italian, and one from the Dutch, and none of them brought a penny—not a penny, by Jove. Now I don't know what to try."

"Burn your dictionaries and try English, something which hasn't been a go abroad. Good night, Binks."

Having launched my darts and avenged myself, and being in a better humour with the nobility and gentry in consequence, I strolled about among the bright rooms, after listening for a while to the gymnastics of a popular soprano, who ran up to the chandeliers and down again in a way to defy catching. But when I caught sight

of Guy Faucit and Daisy Fairfield in close talk together under the shelter of a favouring plant, which might have been transported from the tropics as it stood, after one quick glance I quietly drew away, unnoticed by them. In that one look at the man's face and at the girl's, I knew that my dear old friend had made his confession, and I knew too how it had been answered.

I never saw Daisy Fairfield look so well as she looked that night, the happiest she had ever known, as it was to be her happiest, poor girl, for many a long year. I do not even remember what dress she wore, but I know that the basis and the ground of it were white, seemingly and gracefully adorned. I remember the one purple flower which was set behind the ear, so small and so close to the head; and the wonderful gloss of which nature that evening had been more liberal even than usual to the sunny hair. In that one glimpse I caught of her face, the shy smile which played about the lips matched so perfectly with the deep seriousness in the eyes, that the two expressions made up one. And as she listened to what Faucit was telling her half under his breath, but in that firm full voice of his, or as she let a few words fall from her in answer, she opened and shut her fan mechanically with her right hand, as

the elbow rested upon the arm of the couch on which they were seated side by side. I can recall the quaint watteau patterns upon that fan, a present of Lady Pepperharrow's, and the laces which fringed it, now. Asmodeus the chronicler claims his privilege. What was it that the two said?

"Yes, Miss Fairfield, I love you very earnestly. I have done so since the first day I saw you by the river, I think. Haven't you guessed it?"

"I hardly know, Mr. Faucit, indeed."

"But you knew that I didn't intend to speak. I wanted to have something to offer you better than a law-student's belief in himself before I told you what I have told you now. It isn't much, is it?"

"With you I think that it is," she said, very simply and frankly; and Guy's overfull heart gave a great bound as she said it. "It isn't as if you had not shown what you can do, at Oxford."

There was a pretty pride both in the girl's look and tone.

"Supposing that to be so, the race is not always to the strong."

"To the strong and patient," she answered, "I for one believe that it is."

"But I haven't been patient after all. If you knew how resolved I was not to speak, till I had at least been called to the bar!"

"And what was I to do all that time?" asked Daisy, with a smile which made poor Guy's heart beat faster and faster. Her frankness was so perfect and so winning, so free from any taint of forwardness, so full of utter trust. It never seemed to enter Daisy's head, from the moment when Faucit opened all his heart to her, that she was to play at hiding any of hers from him.

"I suppose you were to wait," he said, with a happy and half-embarrassed little laugh; "and understand all about it all the time. That was to be your part in the comedy."

"Perhaps I should have grown a little tired of it," she said. "But I would have waited!" she added suddenly, then blushed fairly at herself.

"And will wait now?" he asked.

"Yes," she said simply; "if you wish it."

"I must wish it. For I have nothing in the world till I can make it."

"But I have."

"I know; and that's just what I'm afraid of. People would say I asked you for that."

"Do you care much for what people say?" she answered him. "I shouldn't."

"No; but your father might say so. You wouldn't."

"I!" And there was a touch almost of reproach in her tone.

"I was stupid even to say it."

"Well, you were—rather." This with a smile. "But papa is not nearly so hard as you think him. He'll do anything for me; and he will know that you mean to work and to get on. What better use can a girl find for money, than to help a man who means to do that, at starting?"

"You are not a girl," said Guy; "you are a very noble woman."

"Am I?" she answered. "I feel very like a girl to-night. You have made me forget my trouble at home."

"That was what made me speak, you know. I thought you seemed annoyed and anxious about this stranger—this Mr. Brent, you spoke of; and I couldn't help telling you that there was some one who—some one that—"

The athlete broke down in the sentence; but it served.

"And, Mr. Faucit, you were right; and you will be a real help to me. When papa brought this Mr. Brent to dinner and introduced him to me last night, I thought there was something odd in his manner which I couldn't understand. And the man himself was familiar—rudely so even. I haven't been able to shake off an uncomfortable feeling all day, and came here as if something was going to happen."

"Something has—hasn't it?" asked Guy.

"Yes. But not quite like that."

"What is this Mr. Brent?"

"I don't know. 'Something in the city,' which sounds like anything in the world, from a diamond-merchant to a crossing-sweeper. I don't want to think of Mr. Brent again."

"And I don't want you to think of him. You have told me that I may go and speak to your father to-morrow, and tell him everything?"

"Yes, Mr. Faucit."

"One thing more."

"What's that?"

"You haven't answered my question yet."

"What was it?"

"Whether you love me or not?"

"Haven't I?"

"Not in words. Won't you? Do you?"

"Yes; indeed I do."

"Ah! And when will you begin to call me Guy?"

A big pause. Then she said, "Now, Guy."

* * * * *

"What a lovely looking girl!" said to Lady Luscombe, a little later, as Daisy was walking through the rooms, a dark and singular-looking man with a pale oval face, and jet black hair parted in the middle, who seemed some six-and-thirty years old, if any clear guess at his age could be made. He had nothing distinctive in his dress, which was very simple; but everybody who looked at him looked at him again, and it was to be noted that all who spoke to him spoke to him with marked deference. Lady Luscombe was leaning on his arm, and he was twisting a hoop-ring round the fourth finger of his right hand.

Lady Luscombe looked carelessly up, as she had been absorbed in some close conversation with this man which the remark interrupted. Her eye was caught too, at once, not more by the beauty of the girl, than by the air of refinement which was especially Daisy's own.

"She is indeed," she said. "I wonder who she is. As I don't know her myself, and never saw her before, I must ask Lady Pepperharrow."

"The young lady doesn't look much like a friend of our gentle hostess," said the other, with a sneer in the words which his tone hardly marked. "But whoever she is we must know more of her. She must be an ornament in your rooms this season; it is always an advantage to introduce a sensation. A fine-looking fellow with her, too; a Briton of the true broad-shouldered Viking type. She is too good for him, and he can be dispensed with."

"He is very much absorbed by his pretty companion," Lady Luscombe said.

"Clearly. Calf-love to be killed young. There's Pentonville. He'll find out all about the girl's parentage, prospects, and general health in five minutes. Pentonville!"

A tightly-booted and short-sighted little gentleman hopped across the room. "W—w—w—"

"Well?"

"No—what! W—what is it, Lestrange?"

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. JOHN BRENT.

MR. FAIRFIELD was in his study, closeted with a friend. The friend was not a person who excited feelings of sympathy at the outset. He was little and dried-up, like a medlar; and looked as if the drying process had taken place as much inside as out. His face wore the livery of the burnished sun in the especial form it assumes in complexions which have been tanned and dried in India, from an improper understanding of the conditions of Indian life. Mr. John Brent looked as if he should sit for a picture of liver. He had a little iron-grey head of hair, which he brushed back as far as he could, so that with the help of the baldness at the parting the revealed expanse might pass for a high forehead. The real forehead, which is bounded in anatomy by the frontal bone, was

so low that there was nothing of it, the bone of boundary being nearly in his eyes, which were pink and ferrety, and winked like sickly stars. Little iron-grey whiskers, ending half way down his face, and looking as if they were gummed on, they stuck so close, completed the physiognomy of the man very consistently. His voice was shrill and weak, and worked on one note or in an exasperating manner. Neither his tones nor Mr. Fairfield's grating voice were agreeable to listen to; more especially as on the occasion which had now brought them together, there was considerable excitement on both sides.

Mr. Brent had been the Calcutta correspondent of the firm of Fairfield and Co.; and it was with Calcutta that the younger partner in the house had been coquetting, with the disastrous results which our story has already foreshadowed.

When Mr. Brent, himself a man of realized fortune, came home from Calcutta to settle down in nabobhood, he brought with him the sentence of death of the firm of Fairfield and Co. if he chose to pass it. The whispers on 'Change which heralded his coming were as correct as they were ominous, and Mr. Brent was not a man to let any foolish feeling of sympathy stand in

his way, or prevent his claiming his pound of flesh to the full.

It is not necessary to tell, nor could I exactly do it, the process of events by which Mr. Brent had become the arbiter of the fate of the house of Fairfield; but financial operations on a large scale are apt to lead into no-thoroughfares of the kind, and I am grateful to the Providence which has ordered my lot in opener pastures, and saves me from great fears, if from lofty hopes, for the fate of the salt-cellar on my modest table.

Mr. Brent had had his wings somewhat singed by the operations of his correspondents in London, though those financial pinions of his, on which he sailed home, were very broad indeed. He resented the injury, and armed with divers acceptances and other documents of a pernicious nature, he came to London breathing flames and fury against Fairfield and Co.

The early history of John Brent had absolutely nothing in it to interest anybody. He was one of those gentlemen who make themselves; and in his case nobody could grudge him the exclusive credit of the manufacture. It may safely be predicated of him that he landed in India with the traditional half-crown in his pocket, as Benjamin Franklin came to Philadelphia.

"After all, when you come to think of it there's nothing in it. Anybody could have done it," says Mark Twain, in the funniest essay he ever wrote. These sort of people, not that I would compare Benjamin Franklin with John Brent, always do begin life with half-a-crown. Where do they get it from? and why is it always half-a-crown? The unvarying character of the sum makes one suspicious of these self-making gentlemen.

Alexander Dumas, — *the* Dumas, — the dear old Dumas of 'Monte Cristo,' and 'D'Artagnan,' and the 'Tour de Nesle,'—not he of the morbid Aspasiac school, whom the soul of Binks loveth and worshippeth as a great creator, which indeed he is so far, in that, while another made the world, he made the half-world,— Dumas the first confessed to an original capital of two louis. "My son," he said, nearly at the end of his days, when he was being reproached with his still incurable prodigalities, the big-natured, generous old giant, "My son, there is no charge I deserve less. Sixty years ago I came to Paris with two louis in my pocket, and look," he added, turning it out, "I've got one left still!"

John Brent was not a prodigal, being indeed one of the meanest persons to be found on a summer's day,

and his half-crown had made a very large number more when he came to England to enjoy the fruits of his toils and scrapings. "This was a way to thrive, and he was blessed," after the measure of his desires. What sort of enjoyment he would manage to extract from his riches might have been a problem to any one who examined him in Mr. Fairfield's study.

Now it came to pass that Mr. Brent had no wife; and that one of the first things he proposed to do in England was to buy one. He was sixty, no doubt, well rung; but he had been what the world agrees to call a man of no vices, and he flattered himself that his health and constitution must therefore be those of a young man, of necessity. He was as angry with his liver as Mr. Fairfield was with his throat, and would not admit that it could be out of order, or that excessive desk-work and inordinate cheese-paring, coupled with a masterly neglect of all the humanities and liberalities of life, could produce anything of the ill effects which properly follow upon vicious careers. Virtue and self-denial, he felt or asserted, had been his rules of conduct. He had neither chick nor child, and if he had any relations in England, he did not intend to find them out or to acknowledge them. His memories of them

were of the vaguest, dating back to the half-crown days, when, as likely as not, some tipsy or improvident father had turned him out of the house to shift for himself. It may well be that it was not so; that the *res angusta domi* had been no fault of any one's, and that the parting had been one of bitter tears, and much heart-breaking on some poor struggling mother's part. Perhaps on the boy's too, for if there be some people who seem to be born bad, and some who have badness thrust upon them, assuredly there are very many men who achieve badness for themselves, by a course of deliberate egotism, beginning perhaps in no source that can fairly be called evil. Such men are, indeed, self-made. If there was any such love and tenderness in the far background, there was no trace or shadow of it upon John Brent's spirit now, and he started on his proposed St. Martin's summer with a clear tablet. Whether he had married before, in his youth, I do not know. If he had, history has no record of the first Mrs. Brent, who certainly left no child, and probably died of a broken heart, or of the want of sufficiently generous living. It didn't matter to Mr. Brent, and it doesn't matter to our story.

When Mr. Brent had been but a few days in

London, and had brought the head of the house of Fairfield to the verge of distraction, he called one day in Portland Place, and he caught sight of Daisy. The little Indian was overcome by the gracious vision, and saw his opportunity at once. It was in his power, by no great pecuniary sacrifice on his part, to tide over the difficulties which beset the London house, to save the credit of Fairfield's, and to start the firm fairly on its way again. For this Mr. Fairfield had recourse to entreaty, and brought all the influence he could to bear, without being driven to expose the true condition of affairs to the world, in order to work upon the feelings of the arbiter of his destiny. But the arbiter had no feelings to work upon, and frankly said that it was a mere matter of business. He bore no ill-will to Fairfield's whatever, but there was no reason in this case for suspending the ordinary course of events, and he did not see that any consideration was or could be offered which would or could make it worth his while to be merciful. On what compulsion must he ? tell him that. Everything to this sun-dried anatomy was mere bargain and sale, for he was so effectually tanned as to keep out feeling or sympathy as long as the tanner of Hamlet's gravedigger could keep out the water.

Mr. Fairfield saw nothing before him but ruin. He had not even provided the refuge from the storm secured by a large settlement on his wife, which in such cases has often enabled the bankrupt merchant, while hundreds of people who unfortunately trusted him are left penniless and destitute, to retire into obscure misery on five or ten thousand a year. Perhaps Mr. Fairfield's reliance on his house's credit had been too high; perhaps he had a conscience of his own in spite of all his failings. In any case so it was. Keeping his counsel as best he could at home, but causing real and increasing uneasiness to his wife and daughter, he saw something very like want stare him and his family in the face, when Mr. John Brent cast eyes of favour upon Daisy. *Vera incessu patuit Dea,* to him as to mortals of higher and finer grain, this stately and attractive young lady. Mr. Brent did not deceive himself in relation to the purchase which he desired to make, and quite understood that even with his money he might find a deficiency in the market of the precise article he wanted. Therefore he regarded the appearance of Daisy upon the scene as absolutely providential. I have not alluded to a fashion of Mr. Brent's, which gave especial offence to many of those who had dealings with

him, of constantly referring to Providence the issue of his keenest bargains. In fact, I don't like to talk or think about it, for to me I know of nothing more terrible than this particular form of hypocrisy. It gives me a feeling of nervous dread for those who indulge in it. Mr. Brent's moral lectures to Mr. Fairfield, on the ordained and divine consequences of commercial remissness, had exasperated that combative old man more than anything else. But indeed it was curious to see how subdued his arrogance was in Brent's presence, and how supplicatory his tone became.

The returned Indian saw at once that in Daisy Fairfield, if only she should prove a dutiful and amenable daughter, he had found exactly what would suit him best, and fulfil his domestic ambition. Here was a woman to make his table attractive, to amuse his declining years when they should begin to decline, which, in his opinion, must be a long way off yet, and till then to shed fresh blossoms upon what he secretly believed to be still the fervour of his youth. He saw at a glance, in which he was not peculiar, though his own penetration pleased him very much, that in externals his victim's daughter was all that heart could wish. Mr. Vavasour did not know better what he was about,

or decide more methodically, when he paid Marian Teesdale the compliment of selection. Internals did not matter; for Daisy was evidently young enough to be moulded by a husband of his tact and experience. John Brent had, he thought, a very successful way with women.

And so, on the morning of the day of Lady Pepperharrow's gathering, the day immediately preceding that which finds him in the study in Portland place, the Indian millionnaire without much prelude propounded his scheme to the English defaulter, as he took very good care to let Fairfield know, in plain terms, that he was. He had not been informed of the domestic history of his correspondent, and till he accidentally saw her, he knew nothing of the "one fair daughter, and no more," whom, like Jephthah, judge of Israel, and the excellent Polonius, the poor father from his heart, and in his way, really loved passing well.

Matters were at a crisis, and Fairfield was resigning himself to his fate. The junior partner, who was young and go-ahead, and had feathered his private nest on the chance of cold weather, about which he said nothing, shrugged his shoulders and preached some philosophy to his elder in a curiously provoking way. He was

really shocked to find how culpably careless Fairfield had been in not providing for his wife and family, as every good citizen was bound to do in such uncertain times, in the precarious state of business. Poor Fairfield, driven to bay, indignantly declared that there never had been anything precarious in his business at all, never need have been, and never would have been, but for the rashness and experiments of the junior partner, who expressed pity.

"My dear sir! As if it is possible for any intelligent man not to move with the times! What you call rashness and experiments are courage and prudence at once, in the altered conditions of city-life. Why, my dear sir, America would annihilate us, literally annihilate us, if we did not keep pace with her as far as we can in the race of commercial enterprise. She has great advantages against which we must in any case find it hard to hold our own; but you would handicap us so completely that all English trade would go to the wall. Your theories, my dear sir, are impossible, exploded, out of date. It is true that we have been unfortunate; but though I would not say anything to add to your distress of mind at such a time,—my own is deep, my dear Mr. Fairfield, very deep,—I must,

in justice to myself, say, that our misfortunes are chiefly to be attributed to your most ill-timed conservatism, and the manner in which you have thwarted—yes, my dear sir, I must say thwarted—all my schemes for the welfare of the house."

Mr. Brent, who had never in his life risked a rash experiment of any kind, entirely endorsed the junior partner's views, and between them they almost persuaded the unhappy man to regard himself as the prime mover of his own disestablishment. To do him justice, he thought more of his wife and daughter than he did of himself in the ruin which was coming upon them all. The junior partner put on his shining hat, and gloves of faultless kid, and with a clear conscience betook himself to his club for a basin of soup, and some particular Amontillado, whereon to meditate on the fresh start that he should be able to make when unencumbered with the old-fashioned concern which, after all, he was well quit of, as soon as the nine days' wonder should be over.

Honest Threadneedle, the clerk, went to his chop-house hopeless and crest-fallen, with something very like tears in his eyes, and denied himself his usual beer. Mr. Brent was left alone with Fairfield, and came straight to the point.

"You have been constantly asking me, Fairfield, if there was no consideration on which I would consent not to press my claims against your house."

"Yes, I have. There is nothing in the world I wouldn't do, if you will but give me the time to tide over the difficulty," answered the other.

"Tiding over difficulties like yours is all nonsense and sheer self-delusion," said Brent, sharply. "You've got into a bad way, and you'll only flounder into worse."

"Still you might show me some consideration, after all our dealings together."

"In the name of common sense, why?"

"We have done a great deal to build up your business and your fortune, Brent, and that you know," growled Fairfield, though the growl was in a key sufficiently subdued.

"And what of that?" snapped Brent. "It was all in the way of business, wasn't it? You didn't build up my fortune, as you call it, out of charity and consideration for me, did you?"

"No," acquiesced the other, shortly.

"No; of course not. You did it for business, pure business; and if you had taken the advice of your highly intelligent and most honourable junior partner,

you wouldn't have been in your present position, nor have placed me in mine. However, I shan't waste any more words on recrimination or on sentiment. Sentiment in trade is silly. Let us come to the point. I have found the consideration you have been looking for."

"What do you mean?" asked Fairfield, eagerly.

"I mean that I have found the consideration on which I will not only defer, but forego, all my claims against you; and not only that, but do all I can to put your house safely on its legs again."

"Brent!" gasped Fairfield, getting up from his chair.

A good many men would have hesitated and stammered considerably before making the suggestion the other had to make. Not so Mr. Brent, whose comfortable confidence in himself was equal to all emergencies. He neither stammered nor hesitated at all.

"I think I have told you, Fairfield, or perhaps I haven't, that now that I want to settle in England I want to find a wife."

"A wife!" said the other, in a tone which would have conveyed to anybody else the conviction, that to Mr. Fairfield the idea was entirely new.

"Yes, a wife, and a young wife. I can make her a

fine settlement, and she will be very happy. I want to marry your daughter."

Never till that moment had Mr. Fairfield been in such immediate danger of apoplexy. He grew blue through his natural red, stammered and wondered enough for both, and like Aulus the dictator, scarce gathered voice to speak, or indeed to think.

"My daughter—Daisy—marry—you? You haven't even seen her."

"Yes, I have. I saw her yesterday. I can put half my fortune into your business, and set it on a sounder basis than ever."

The conversation which followed would not, perhaps, be very nice to record. But one or two things which Fairfield said made the other man's eyes glisten in an unpleasant, snake-like fashion, and he showed his teeth in a way to prove to Fairfield that not till that moment had he fully realized how much he was in John Brent's power. John Brent dined that night in Portland Place, with the result on Daisy's mind in the last chapter recorded.

It was on the next day, on the morning after Lady Pepperharrow's *début* in the world of fashion, that the two men were again together in Mr. Fairfield's room.

They had a long talk together, and Mr. Brent took up his hat and went away with a comfortable sense of satisfaction. Mr. Fairfield sate in his arm-chair by himself, and had some brandy-and-water. Then a servant knocked and disturbed his meditations, and told him that a gentleman was upstairs in the drawing-room with Mrs. Fairfield, and had asked to see him. The name on his card was Mr. Guy Faucit.

"A friend of my wife and daughter, the young fellow who has dined here three or four times," muttered Fairfield to himself. "What does he want to see me for?"

He was not sorry to change the current of his thoughts, and when he had finished his brandy-and-water he went upstairs.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE COUP DE GRÂCE.

Mrs. Fairfield was sitting on a low chair before the fire, looking very small and frightened. Guy Faucit was standing on the hearthrug near her, frank and much in earnest; and it was clear that the conversation which had been passing between them must have interested them both in a high degree. Mrs. Fairfield fidgetted in her chair when her husband came in, and looked at him appealingly, rather like a dog who is doubtful whether he has or has not been guilty of some breach of the law, and tries to discover from his master's eyes whether he is going to be beaten or not. Faucit met him in a comfortable, straightforward way, with no consciousness in his manner that there was anything unusual to be said, and the two men shook hands.

"I asked to see you, Mr. Fairfield," said Guy, "because I have something especial to say which I wish to say to you myself."

"What is it, Mr. Faucit?" asked the other, who knew his visitor as a man who had dined at his house and made himself pleasant, but had paid him no special attention. There was not much in common between them to make it otherwise. It is possible that Mr. Fairfield was not fully aware of all the five o'clock teas and other meetings which had taken place, though there had been no conscious concealment in the matter. "Can I be of any service to you?" The merchant's manner was nervous and pre-occupied, and he did not sit down, but walked about the room.

His wife watched him uneasily, and then made an appeal to Guy.

"I think, Mr. Faucit, you had better go now. We can talk about this afterwards."

"No, Mrs. Fairfield," he answered, "I have nothing to hide. I came to ask you, sir, if I may marry your daughter?"

The declaration was point-blank enough, certainly; and I think that, under the circumstances, Mr. Fairfield was a good deal to be pitied. He had been thinking

about his daughter, of course, since Brent had propounded his scheme, and about nothing else. Even in that short time he had begun to reconcile himself to the notion of the marriage as far as he was concerned. John Brent had given him a full account of himself, and he was richer even than Fairfield had imagined. A more distinguished son-in-law would have been more agreeable to his taste, no doubt; but the fortune and the security were the chief thing, after all. And the anxiety of the last months had so shaken and worn the merchant under that hard outside of his, that there was hardly any price he was not ready to pay to feel secure again. Fairfield and Co. safe and sound once more, and starting afresh under better auspices than ever; the reign of reason resumed, for Fairfield knew his man, and the odious junior partner suppressed and outvoted:—all this made up a prospect which effectually dazzled Daisy's father, and blinded him, in the attractions of its horizon, to the unsightly character of the foreground. It must be remembered, besides, that Fairfield was not recognized as an agreeable person himself, and did not resent the odious characteristics of Mr. Brent as a man of a higher nature would have done. He hated the man certainly, because he

was in his power. But if he got out of it he didn't see why they shouldn't pull well enough together.

Yes; but Daisy? Mr. Fairfield was an autocrat at home, and his daughter had never failed for a moment in duty and obedience. But all the softness in his nature had been for her, and he would have spoiled her, probably, if she had been to be spoiled. He was an affectionate father to her, and in spite of domestic rubs, and his constant impatience with his wife, there had been always something between them which was even like sympathy, different as their ways and natures were. With her keen sense of fun, Daisy could not help feeling how intensely irritating her poor mother's placid submission, or tactless little provocations, must be to the old gentleman at times; and her care in smoothing difficulties and averting collisions was exercised as much for the sake of one as of the other. At the bottom of Daisy's character, however, lay a firmness which the father strongly suspected, though so far it had shown itself only in every-day directions. He had more than once been on the verge of confiding his whole trouble to her, and deserved genuine credit for denying himself the confession, from real unwillingness to cloud her opening life. What

shape might that firmness take in the face of such a proposal as John Brent's? Daisy would not disobey her father by taking any step he disapproved, that he knew; but whether she would obey him to the extent of doing what she rebelled against herself, was another question. Therefore he was meditating the time and way in which he was to make the full state of the case known, of which Brent consented to let him be the judge, and he had nearly concluded that the sooner it was done the better. Brent suggested frequent visits to the house, and many opportunities of wooing; but Fairfield shrewdly suspected that the opportunities might not turn as much to the wooer's advantage as that gentleman flattered himself. It would be a plunge when it came, and it might be better to take it before the waters had been sounded too closely for reefs.

Meanwhile, it had been with much satisfaction to both that Fairfield had been able to assure Brent of the important fact that there was nobody else in the way. To that effect had been almost the last words which had passed downstairs; and then, suddenly, and with the inconvenient promptness of a stage-apparition, started up before the merchant's eyes in

his own drawing-room, one of the finest-looking young men he ever saw in his life, who, with no prospects or position that he had heard of, yet as coolly as if he were a prince of the blood royal asking for a glass of wine, demanded his daughter without prelude or warning, and obviously, as the father felt in a moment, with the daughter's own leave. The daughter was suddenly assuming an importance in the world quite out of proportion to the due order of things. Wasn't he to be considered in the matter at all? he began to think, in the general confusion of faculties which was taking possession of him. And the effect of Guy Faucit's bomb-shell, suddenly discharged into this disorganized camp, was to throw Septimus Fairfield of Portland Place and Mincing Lane, merchant, after his first struggle with perplexity, into a most tremendous rage.

Guy Faucit has been kept, by this disquisition, a long time waiting for his answer, which, when it came, was strangled at its birth in a neckcloth, and was simply this—"Good heavens!" Mr. Fairfield's veins swelled before Faucit's eyes, and his complexion became Homeric in its purple.

"You have taken me by surprise, sir! you have

taken me by surprise! I really don't know how to answer such an extraordinary thing. I really—God bless my life and soul!"

Mrs. Fairfield detected the signs of gathering wrath, and interposed in a nervous tremor, "Septimus dear, Mr. Faucit doesn't mean any harm."

"Good gracious, Jane, don't talk in that way. Mean any harm! God bless me! God bless me! Do you know what you are asking, sir?" in a tone of positive bewilderment.

"Yes, Mr. Fairfield. I am asking for your daughter to become my wife some day. I am asking with her own permission."

"You are? And you have absolutely, sir, absolutely accepted my hospitality to abuse it in this manner, and taken advantage of a girl's passing fancy to attempt to secure her affections without her parents' knowledge? I never heard of such a thing."

Faucit's face was flushing slowly, and his manner very grave. He was on the point of appealing to Mrs. Fairfield whether she had not been well aware of what had been passing under her eyes, when he read in her face such an unspoken appeal on her side, that with instinctive generosity he let that defence go. He had

been enough in the house to guess that Mrs. Fairfield's lines were not cast in the smoothest of places, besides gathering much from Daisy. But he answered Fairfield steadily.

"I have never done anything underhand in my life," he said, "and should not have begun with your daughter. I have never disguised my wishes from the moment I formed them, and I have not lost an hour in speaking to you since having Miss Fairfield's answer."

"You should have spoken to me first, sir!" said the other, growing more and more angry with Faucit's calm superiority of tone. He felt already that he was not coming out of it well.

"I cannot agree with you, Mr. Fairfield. A man has no right to presume so far on a woman's consent as to speak before he gets it. He can hardly pay her a worse compliment than that."

"I shall not be lectured about the claims of a parent, sir!" stormed Mr. Fairfield, who, in the perplexity of his position, was forgetting himself very fast indeed.

"Septimus, dear Septimus!" murmured his weaker half.

"Upon my soul, ma'am, I believe that you must have known of this business and never told me! this

most discreditable business! To trade on the passing fancy of a young girl——"

"Mr. Fairfield, I cannot let you speak like that, even though you are her father. I don't believe Miss Fairfield's feeling for me to be a passing fancy; but that you can find out from herself. I have the right to know the strength of my own feeling, and to ask you if you will one day allow your daughter to be my wife."

Guy's manner was so studiously respectful that it was difficult to quarrel with it; but the weakness of Mr. Fairfield's cause made him quarrelsome. He disliked the vision of Brent in the background very much indeed, and felt that the Indian's chances would be materially lessened by the appearance of so singularly personable a rival. He still kept up his favourite tone of bluster, though he perceived even in his wrath that bullying was thrown away on his troublesome visitor.

"What prospects have you, sir, may I ask?" he said. "I have heard that you are only reading for the bar."

"That is the case, Mr. Fairfield," answered Guy. "I can pretend to no position and no immediate prospects; but—"

"I knew it, sir, I knew it, and could have sworn as

much!" The merchant was inwardly delighted with his chance, for if Faucit had had definite prospects to offer, his position would have been more awkward. "Yet you presume to come forward and ask me to give you my daughter, who has been accustomed all her life to a position which I do not intend her to lose; on the strength, I suppose, of all that you mean to do when you are called to the bar! No, sir; I assure you that I do not intend her to lose it, or to share a crust with anybody! I shall wish you good afternoon, and beg that I may never hear of this again."

"Mr. Fairfield," said Guy quietly, but in a way which enforced a hearing even from the man he was speaking to, "I hope that you will regret this some day. Nothing will tempt me to show any disrespect to Daisy's father, or to use hard words with him. You give me very hard ones, and, as I think, without reason. I have a very honest love to offer, and I gave up a good and secure position at Oxford that I might be able to offer it. I don't think you should have spoken to me as you have. My Oxford work gives me the right to look for a fair measure of success at the bar, and I have already a good connection in the writing-way."

Mr. Fairfield grunted at the display of this last card

of poor Guy's, which he might as well not have played. "The writing-way," in the eyes of Mr. Fairfield, was a rather disreputable road to starvation.

"I never supposed," Faucit went on to say, "that you would sanction any immediate marriage with your daughter."

"Immediate indeed!" said the other. "What on? On my money, do you suppose?"

"I suppose there would be nothing unreasonable in thinking you would help your daughter," answered Guy. "She thought so. But I should myself prefer to wait till I had made a good start for myself."

"And keep a young girl dancing attendance upon hopes for the best years of her life, I suppose. Fairness to her, if you meant that, should have prevented you speaking."

"I don't think so myself," said the other. "It is far fairer than leaving any one in doubt of a serious feeling. But I see that I have made a mistake in speaking to you, and for the present I shall not say any more. Good-bye."

"Stop one moment," said Fairfield. "Am I to understand that you give up this foolish nonsense altogether?"

"I shall never give it up," answered Faucit.

"And you tell me that to my face?" shouted the other, whose temper, in spite of himself, had been quieted by Faucit's tone, but now boiled over again. "I tell you, sir, that I forbid you now or at any time to think of my daughter. And mind, let me hear nothing of any more meetings of any kind! Before you go, give me your word that you will not attempt to see the young lady again."

"I don't think that you have the right to ask me for any promise of the kind," said Guy. "Neither Miss Fairfield nor I, you may be sure, are likely to do anything to be ashamed of."

"Oh, Mr. Faucit, I'm sure you won't, either of you," interrupted the unlucky third at this disagreeable scene. "Please go now, and don't come again at present. I am sure Mr. Fairfield doesn't mean anything unkind, do you?" But her lord and master was only fuming.

"Good-bye, Mrs. Fairfield, and thank you for all your kindness," said Guy, pressing the good-natured hand. "I can't say good-bye to Daisy before I go, can I?" he added to her hurriedly.

"She is out for the day, indeed she is," answered the mother. "But you are sure to hear from her or me."

"Of course," said Guy. And with another grave salutation to the excited man of business, he was gone. Even while he was still on the stairs, he heard the storm bursting upon the head of the devoted Jane.

Guy Faucit went quietly home to his chambers, revolving. This was a check at starting which he had not been prepared for, though he told himself rather angrily that he ought to have been. He had taken Mr. Fairfield too much on trust from Daisy, instead of believing in his own conclusions about her father's purse-pride and want of refinement of mind. There was a little injustice in this, as we know; and if the merchant had not been fairly driven to the wall by the situation, of which Guy and Daisy were equally ignorant, it is probable that his daughter would have had no very great difficulty in bringing him round. She had made Guy feel so convinced that this was the case, that he was fairly astounded at the ferocity of his reception, though he had not of course supposed that Mr. Fairfield would jump at his offer. He felt rather annoyed with Daisy, therefore, as well as with himself, for he could not disguise from himself that the merchant's objections were of a nature altogether too strong to be conciliated as they had hoped. Well, it

could not be helped : the course of true love was going to run roughly, as usual, and the flinty hearts of fathers to inflict the usual bruises on the supplicating hands knocking at the door of them.

Another man than Faucit would have been more down-hearted than he. He could not, in spite of his annoyance, as yet regard the situation very seriously. He felt as sure of Daisy as of himself, and smiled as he thought of the father scheming for ambitious marriages, or trying to argue her out of her love. Probably he should not see her for a few days, and their meetings might even be suspended for a longer time than that. But the separation was one which they could both accept, and was too unreasonable to last.

Guy knew that he should hear from Daisy the next day, and her letter would tell him the line he must take, which it rested with her to decide. He thought that he knew what the letter would be, and could indulge his fancy in watching her think it out and write it, with its calm assurance of the future and counsel of short patience, and regret that for the moment she had misled him.

With these thoughts in his mind he smoked his pipe placidly enough in his fireside corner, rather

amusing himself mentally at the remembrance of Mr. Fairfield's angry airs of Bashawship, but withal a little puzzled by their vehemence, suggestive of something in the air which he couldn't quite understand. Then he migrated to his writing-table, and added a postscript to the letter which he had written to the old mother down in Devonshire, in the first flush of his happiness and pride, making her, as he had done throughout, the confidant of all his proceedings, all his hot and cold fits, wherein the cold had played but a brief and bracing part, and anticipating the day when "the two sweetest women in the world" should come to know each other.

Daisy had sent through him, in that first part of the letter, a sweet and tremulous message of her own.

"Dearest Mother," added the postscript, "I shall let this letter go, as it will tell all the story. But we have counted without our host, if I may describe by that name a gentleman who has incontinently kicked me out of his house, abused me for presumption and fortune-hunting and other pleasant things, and generally behaved like the Emperor of China with a fit of the gout. Indeed, I think Fairfield Papa rather resents the indignity of *not* being Emperor of China. My

Daisy made rather a mistake in sending me to him; but it will all come right, and I am not much disturbed. When I can write of her as 'my Daisy'—doesn't it look nice on paper? but if you could only hear how it sounds!—nothing matters very particularly. We shall bring Timour round between us, Daisy doing the best part of it. I am sure to hear from her to-morrow, and I think I know what the letter will be. God bless you, little mother. This bonnie conquest of my bow and spear will draw you and me together closer than ever.

"Your own son,

"G. F."

Guy worked well on to his usual hour that night, and slept the sleep of the just without dreaming of Daisy, though he wanted and expected to dream of her. He told me long afterwards that he kept on dreaming of me all the night in a perverse sort of way, and resented it in his sleep as a personal injury, wanting some one else, and not knowing why.

When the laundress had done the fire and cooked the chop, and Faucit came out of his bedroom to his bachelor-breakfast, the post brought the expected letter, and his heart jumped at the sight of the well-

known hand. It was a good hand, free and firm, but womanly, and he treasured many scraps of it in small notes of invitation or thanks. It must be admitted that, in the presence of his unseen Asmodeus, Guy kissed the new-comer two or three times before he opened it. But when he did open it, what he read was this:

"I am too deeply sad and sore to know well how to write to you. But you must forget last night, Mr. Faucit, or that I was ever able to call you anything else. I will not say that we shall never meet again, because I hope that one day we shall; but it cannot be for a long time, and never in the way you wish. I cannot help hoping that this will not prevent your persevering at the bar, for you were born for a great success. But whether you do this, or whether you return to Oxford, my best wishes, and my prayers too, will always be with you. My father owes you an apology for the manner in which he received you yesterday, and so do I for having exposed you to it. Will you let me make them both, for him and me? I am afraid you will be very grieved and very angry, but if you knew everything you would not blame us so much. I could not let the post go without writing, as I knew

you must expect it; but perhaps if I had had more time, I might have written in some other and better way. But when good-bye must be said, perhaps it doesn't much matter how we say it. Good-bye.

"Always your friend,

"DAISY FAIRFIELD."

Guy Faucit read the letter through and through, and again through, without being able to grasp and comprehend it. A dismissal!—like that—and from her! whom he had believed in as in Truth. When he could bring himself to grapple with it fairly, he read in the letter a clear and final decision. If he had laughed at Mr. Fairfield's pronouncement of his sentence, he knew now that the Court of Appeal had positively confirmed it, and without reason given.

Daisy Fairfield was right when she wrote, that Guy would be grieved and angry. But she did not quite know how sternly so. He was simply stunned. With his strong instinctive sense of right and honour, Guy felt, as soon as he could feel, that if there were reasons in the case, as the letter hinted, apart from that of his position and hers, which the father had so rudely given, those reasons should have been told. I

do not think that he made enough allowance there, in his fulness of manhood, for the gentler and more shrinking fibre of which the noblest womanhood is made. But the result of his view was, that he disbelieved in any such reason at once, and, in the first flush of indignation, at all events, accepted the whole thing as over. It was enough for Guy to make up his mind that if Daisy Fairfield had been what he had believed her, she would not have written that letter. She was only a flirt then, after all! How cruelly letters often miss their mark, and what harm they do.

Daisy Fairfield, I think, confidently expected some answer. Either Guy would write or come, and there would be an explanation between them. The reader will divine, of course, that she had learned the state of his affairs from her father on her return home that day. But Guy neither came nor wrote, but met the blow with characteristic silence. For two or three days he worked on as hard as ever, but said nothing to any one of what had passed. Then he grew sleepless and nervous, and felt that he did not work well. Then he announced that he should take leave of absence from his pleader's chambers for a time, and went straight down to his mother's in Devonshire.

CHAPTER XV.

OVER.

Yes; they are deceptive things, those letters, and have caused in this world an infinity of misunderstandings, some of which are destined never to be cleared up. My conscience is good and my digestion sound; yet I shrink from the post instinctively, and rejoice when fate casts my lines in a place where there is no afternoon delivery. I am unable to understand the frame of mind so common to women, which makes the post hour a delight and a curiosity; and always feel a sense of grateful relief if a day comes which brings no letters with it. It seems to me like so many possible disagreeables the less. Quarrels without end, misconceptions without number, rudenesses, intended or no, which would be impossible at a personal interview, are sown broadcast all over the country every night and morning

by those agents of mischief, bearing the Queen's head on them. Very sad are the offences which rise through them, never to be explained till explanation comes too late; and all, very often, because the receiver cannot read between the lines, or tell anything of the workings and strivings which possessed the reader's heart, but could find no voice upon his pen.

Very different would Guy Faucit's frame of mind have been, and very different his course of conduct, if he had seen the expression upon Daisy's face when she wrote him that farewell letter. Had he been there to see, he would have seen the tranquil and trustful face moved to a very tumult of passion which he had never suspected in her. One of the fears which he sometimes expressed to his mother was, that there was even too much about her of the *φρονῆμα νηνέμου γαλάνας*—the spirit of an unruffled calm. Its charm was great, but it sometimes perplexed him; and it was that perhaps partly which led to his rapid acquiescence in the outward seeming of her letter now, and his belief that in that stately way of hers she had only been playing with him all the time, and was really like the rest of womankind, worldly in her heart. He had thought her something so very different, had held

her so priceless in his esteem, apart even from his love, that for her sake he was beginning to believe that even the rest of womankind were better than the romancers—those of their own sex especially—are so fond of painting them; and he could not bear to have his idol broken. If he had only seen! If she had only had no second thoughts, but had sent him straight off, without afterthought or reflexion, the passionate adieu which first she trusted to the paper, dashed off through a very mist of tears. It was an adieu, no doubt, as was the other; but it would have brought him within the next hour to her father's house, had he been ten times as roughly expelled from it the day before. An instinct led her to shrink from reading that letter when it was finished, for she knew that it was right and true, and the envelope was in her hand to close when that evil spirit called Expediency whispered to her to pause and to think, and she took the letter out and read it through. Then the hot tears fell faster yet, and the brave heart beat still more loudly, and the blushes gathered round the tears, and she leant her head upon her hands and thought. Could she, Daisy Fairfield, have written to one to whom she had given herself but the evening before, in the language of a passion so

undisguised as that? What if he, that manly and perfect lover, should think such lack of reserve unmaidenly? Oh, no, no; and she wrote with a sore heart and toiling head the other letter, whose meaning she thought he would surely read behind the words. Could she have such a love in her heart, and he not see it? Could she disguise from him, however carefully she wrote, the passion of pride in him, and happiness for both which had lived in her all that day, from the moment she knew from his own lips that what she hoped was true, and that she had conquered her hero for her very own? No; he would answer her, he would demand to see her; and neither she nor her father, nor any one in the wide world, would have the right to refuse him. So she sent the second letter, and she put the first away—away in a desk among her girl's treasures, where she read and re-read it many a weary time in the year to come. Long, long after, with a blush she showed it him.

She had come home from Lady Pepperharrow's very bright and full of hope. When she gave her mother the good news, the mother rejoiced in it for her daughter's sake, and promised her to love Guy, and think him the most perfect and fascinating of human

beings. Indeed, she liked him very thoroughly already, for he had always shown her all the deference and consideration, which so wins old ladies' hearts from the young and strong.

Mrs. Fairfield, however, shook her head over her Septimus, and very much doubted if he would look at the matter in the rosy light with which the imaginations of mother and daughter invested it. To them, it was clear that Guy Faucit would be Attorney-General and Lord Chief Justice in no time, if he did not feel tempted to take to politics and become Prime Minister; but it was on the card that Septimus Fairfield might regard this brilliant future as not proven, and require solid guarantees from any candidate for his daughter's hand. Mrs. Fairfield knew that her husband regarded himself as a very considerable personage indeed; and moreover, she augured ill of the present condition of his temper, with which he had visited her of late so much.

"It's that dreadful brandy and water!" she murmured.

"Not so much the water, I'm afraid, mamma," said Daisy.

"And I'm sure I tell him about it often enough.

Every morning, regularly nearly now, I have to have a long talk with him."

Daisy smiled a little.

"Perhaps there's something wrong in the City, mamma. The City seems to be always going wrong and always coming right. I can't feel out of spirits now, dear, and I'm sure everything is going to turn out for the best. You will see Guy—Mr. Faucit—before he speaks to papa?"

"Yes, my dear,", said Mrs. Fairfield. "I shall be very fond of him for his own sake, as well as yours; and he'll be a great comfort to us all—as great as poor Dick."

"I hope so," answered Daisy, something almost like a sneer curling the pretty lip becomingly enough for the first time since we made her acquaintance. "From something papa said, I believe some of Master Dick's bills have to do with those tempers of his just now, and if so, I'm sure I can't blame him. If there's nothing to do in Ireland, without the pretty language Dick bestows on the place, why is there anything to spend? Money spent on nothing travels a bad road."

The young moralist was very angry; and though the poor mother believed firmly though resignedly in

her Dick, she was but a weak cudgel-wielder in a weak cause, and soon reduced to her final argument, a sigh; which always led to Daisy's, a kiss.

Daisy was not in a mood to dwell on unpleasant subjects, whereas nothing so much as a piece of good news, or a glimpse of happiness, moved Mrs. Fairfield to the verge of tears. She always cried over her congratulations to a friend upon anything, and drew little morals which had nothing at all to do with the question, like an undeveloped Cassandra. She shook her head now over the prospect of how Septimus would take it; but could not discourage her daughter, who at the moment was armed with a full confidence in her own powers of pleasing, and with general auguries of a successful issue for everything.

"He's a very good old father, that of mine, and never likes saying 'No' to me. He won't begin to like it now, when it would be 'no' to the whole happiness and ambition of my life. Besides, what would be the use? I shan't change my mind now, and I'm sure Guy won't."

And the young lady sang herself off on her way to her room, rejoicing. She went out at the time when Guy's momentous visit was expected, from some instinct

of modesty and shyness, and betook herself to her friend Lady Pepperharrow, jubilant over the success of her festivity the night before.

"Oh, Daisy dear, wasn't it delightful? All the supper was eaten before the people went away, and everybody said such kind things. There was a friend of Lady Luscombe's who told Ugh he was like Luke Somebody, which Ugh didn't quite understand. E was a Roman nobleman who gave suppers, and was in the best society of his day. Do you know what is other name was?" enquired her ladyship of Daisy, to whom she was in the habit of referring all her doubtful points in the field of knowledge; and she had many.

"Lucullus?" asked Daisy, laughing.

"That was the name," said the other, quite satisfied. "But this friend of Lady Luscombe's is quite the most remarkable man I have ever met, and so very interesting. Directly you see him you know that he must have been a corsair, or a refugee, or a Fenian, or Don Juan, or something like that. Then he as such a beautiful name—the Count Lestrange. E wants to be introduced to you."

"Does he?" answered Daisy, happy with an infinite content which made Lady Pepperharrow wonder.

She had never seen her favourite look so well, and wished that she could introduce her last admiration, the Count, at once. As it was, she made Daisy promise to dine with her on some early day, to meet Lestrange and the Luscombes, and Daisy was well pleased to promise anything just then. Her heart was full to the brim; and she had all a girl's longing to confide in her friend, and listen to all the delightful sympathy which was sure to be hers. But she had made up her mind that her delicious secret was to be kept until all had been happily arranged at home. So she wandered with Lady Pepperharrow from room to room—watered the drooping flowers, and arranged the demoralised furniture, and was so handy and happy, so laughing and helpful, teasing her friend and caressing her, and so entirely childlike and radiant, that Lady Pepperharrow would fain have adopted her then and there, and have installed her in the new mansion as sole lieutenant and director. It was a pity that she could not; but there be many such pities in the world. Daisy wouldn't even stay all day, neither to dinner nor to tea; but growing a little impatient as the afternoon wore on, and she threw frequent looks at the clock, insisted on departing prematurely, on the plea that she was wanted at home, and

left her hostess with a kiss and a hug which were not to be forgotten for hours. I like to linger over poor Daisy's short-lived happiness, which was to be dissipated at once and cruelly when she reached home.

Her mother met her in the hall with a frightened face, and in a few sentences told her what had happened. "Your father was very angry, dear, and I'm afraid he was very rude. He forbade Mr. Faucit the house, and said that he had not behaved like a gentleman."

Daisy's face flushed to the hair.

"Papa told Mr. Faucit that! On what excuse? how could he dare—?" She checked herself, but she looked very tall and very straight as she stood there.

"I don't know what it means," said the mother. "I'm sure that there's something wrong that we know nothing about, or he never could have spoken like that."

"Where is he?"

"In the study; and he asked to see you directly you came in."

"He shall see me directly," answered the girl, crossing the hall.

"Oh be careful, be careful, there's a dear child! Don't make him worse."

"You need not be afraid, mamma; I feel very quiet indeed. But I must know why he has done this at once." And with a short firm knock at her father's door, she went in, with a sense of strong indignation and of rebellion in her heart. If there was to be anger in this matter, let it be with her, and let her know the reason. She resented a slight to Guy Faucit in a way that would not be denied.

Her thoughts changed when she saw her father. He was huddled in his chair before the fire, and looked ten years older. The high colour seemed to have left his face, and there was a dull pain in his eyes.

"Is it you, Daisy?" he said, in a voice very unlike his own, when she came in. And that was all.

"Yes, papa. What is this that has passed?" She took a chair by his, and rested her hand upon his arm.

"It is a very painful thing; and of course you know."

"I know that Mr. Faucit has been here, and why. But I do not know why it should be painful, unless it is that you spoke to him in a way which nobody can deserve less."

"I can't agree with you there," said Fairfield

quickly. "He was bound to let me know before proposing to my daughter."

"I do not quite see why, papa," she answered, getting up and resting one arm on the mantel-piece, while the other hand played with her glove. "It is I whom he wants to marry. He was bound to let you know directly he had proposed, and he did."

"He led me to believe that you care for him, Daisy," said the other; "but I can scarcely believe it."

"Why not?" she said. "It isn't very difficult to believe." She smiled a little, hoping that the worst was over. "If you knew him, papa, as you will, you would not very much wonder."

"Good God, Daisy! You don't really care for the man much!"

There was real anguish, real regret, in the old man's tone; and Daisy knew then that the worst had to be heard. She turned very pale, and was very still for a moment.

"Papa! what is the matter?"

"You can never be his wife, Daisy."

"Never is a long word," she said, "especially for two people who know their hearts as we do. If we are to wait, we can. But why are we to wait?"

"You do not know him, child."

"Yes, I do. I have been learning since last summer to know him. I have known myself still longer, and know this: that if I ever should meet with anybody who could win me like that, I should not change to him. You are very fond of me, father dear," she added, and knelt at his feet looking up into his face, "and cannot wish me to change."

"He has neither a penny nor a prospect," argued the father, fighting against the confession which he saw must come; for he knew what her answer must be.

"He has all the prospects which brains and energy can give to a man who means to make his way, and to make it for my sake," she said very proudly. "And you have the money to help us at the start easily, if you like, as you always said you should if I married to please you. There is nothing in this that should displease you, papa."

He struggled with himself for a time with an unfeigned misery in his heart, looking round and round for rescue in his thoughts in vain. Then he got up from his chair and walked to the window, turning his face away from her, and without prelude spoke.

"Daisy, I am ruined."

"Papa!"

She did not take it in at once; but he came to her and told her. Very gently and very lovingly, for him; for she was, after all, the pride of his heart and eyes, and she had told him enough to make him feel the heart-break he was preparing for her. He said nothing of the man Brent as yet; he could not, and it was not now the time if he ever could. But clearly and briefly enough he put before her the situation as he had too well realized it. Ruin and poverty, real and hard; and something like—too like—dishonour even in that. Nothing need absolutely be known for a time, and the difficulty might be tided over, perhaps. But for the penniless lover there was neither place nor hope, and Daisy must forget her dream.

"It has been very short, dear," he said appealingly.

"Yes, very short, papa. Not longer than my life."

She went quietly to her room, when she had learned all that she was then to learn. She looked at the thing as such a woman would look. Money or poverty with her would make no difference to Guy; but money or poverty, for him, must to her make all the difference. He was going to be a great man; and proud as she would be to help his career, she would never mar it.

Was she right? I do not know, though I think not. A love like that of those two is too great and rare a blessing to be lost or to be denied upon any terms at all. But the young, when like them, have always the spirit of sacrifice, and do not learn the absolute supremacy of the great claim, till perchance they are too old to profit by the learning. Besides, there was more in the background, and Daisy felt it. When she left her father's room, it was with the knowledge that all was really over, and that Guy and she had better meet no more. Nor was she privileged to tell him all the truth. So she wrote the letter which she knew must be sent, in a spirit of impossible pain. Then—womanlike—desiring the parting and dreading to meet, she hoped and waited for days for an answer—for him. Neither came; and the world went on its usual round again. Daisy dined at Lady Pepperharrow's, and made new acquaintances in a world new to her, with the band of an iron sorrow round her heart. But her charm was as ever, and as she saw and heard no more of Guy, it gathered fresh armour from her pride. Beyond the four who knew it, none knew what had passed.

It seemed the very perversity of fate, that I who knew and loved these two so well, should, on the very

morning after Lady Pepperharrow's party, have left England with a friend for a tour in America, long out of the way of letters and of news. I left with a happy heart for them; and after a shake of the hand with both, that last evening, which was meant to convey my unspoken congratulations on the unconfessed truth. Of the sadness which followed I knew nothing till months afterwards, when it was all too late. Guy never wrote a line to me for years, and for years I never saw him again. When next I met Daisy, she was a Daisy whom I had not known. To his other chief friend, Wilmot, Faucit spoke no word either; but left him to guess. He guessed, as men do guess where their dearest friends are concerned, all on one side. When next he met Daisy a short time afterwards, he bowed to her and wanted to pass by. In arms as was her pride, she mustered courage to speak to him, and she spoke with a cold constraint she would willingly have avoided.

"I have not seen Mr. Faucit lately," she said. "Isn't he well?"

"He has left London, Miss Fairfield."

"Altogether?"

"Altogether, I believe."

And the golden dream was over.

CHAPTER XVI

ALONE IN THE WORLD.

Guy Faucit went down to his mother's to find her very ill. Unselfish in her loving devotion as she always had been, she would not interfere with her boy's work in London by complaints about herself, and her letters to him neither admitted nor showed any change in her. He was shocked when he saw it, almost into forgetfulness of what had brought him down. For her, she had rejoiced greatly in her son's coming; for a fear was upon her that her life was drawing near its quiet end. She had never been strong, and the cold of the winter had tried her severely. And she longed to have her boy with her for a time, if that was to be, as in the old days. If before she left him she could only know that she left him in safe hands, that he would not want a woman's love to care for

and to tend him, without which, in one endearing form or another, she held a man's life to be very much alone, she would be well content to fold her hands, and go to the place of those who had gone before. She wanted to know, she longed to hear, that all was arranged between her boy and Daisy; and then she hoped to make the new daughter's acquaintance thoroughly before the end, and to have some sweet confidences with her over Guy's manifold excellences, to tell her how impervious he had been to all the reigning beauties of Devonshire, and how she had been beginning to despair of his ever finding any one to suit him, in spite of all his mother's entreaties and advice; when suddenly she heard from him how Daisy had descended from the blue, and at the first description made up her mind to welcome the new Mrs. Faucit to the place and heart of the old. She would be able to tell her many things of Guy's tastes and ways, besides all that she would learn for herself, and smooth the path of perfect confidence which those two should tread together after she was gone. Would she have the opportunity of fulfilling this desire of her heart? The warning was upon her, and she knew that her time was short. Therefore she rejoiced with a great gladness over the first part

of that letter of Guy's to her that we have seen, and was painfully affected by the last. She hoped with her boy that all would come right; but felt that Mr. Fairfield's opposition, against which her brave maternal pride rose all in arms,—indeed, she had strongly urged Guy to speak out; for whom could man desire for a son-in-law better than he?—might too surely put an end to her dream of knowing Daisy.

And on her side, the girl of her son's heart was cherishing a kindred hope; for much, very much, of Guy's talk with her was of his mother, in those times when they were coming to understand each other well; and for that, as for other things, she loved him more and more. She was full of a wish to love Guy's mother too, for her own sake; and on the night when she promised to be his they found room for their schemes for the mother in Devonshire, even in the happy after-talk of self which followed upon their common confession.

"Oh, Guy, do you think your mother will care about me? Won't she hate me for taking you away from her?"

"Ask her that yourself, dear," he had answered.

And the sweet tremulous message I have told of,

sent in Guy's letter, made the disappointment which followed all the harder to the old lady. That message was all she was ever to know of Daisy, who never forgot her regrets for the loss, in the after time. Thank God for the faith of some of us, which tells us inwardly, with a full assurance, that elsewhere, if not here, those lost knowledges shall be. I would not hold a blanker creed than that, for the price of the world's ransom.

Mrs. Faucit scented danger in the air when she had Guy's news, and though pained and shocked to the heart, was not surprised, when she heard very briefly from him a few days afterwards, that Mr. Fairfield's dismissal had been ratified by Daisy in a way which he could only regard as final, and that he must have been mistaken all along. All the mother's heart went out to her boy in his disappointment, and she wrote at once and begged him to come to her. She was not well, she told him, by way of further inducement, and would be very glad of his society for her own sake, as he would value hers now for his.

"I do not understand quite what has happened, my boy," she wrote; "for you speak of it very shortly. I hope all is not so ill as you think; but if you will

come here, I can advise you and talk to you as I used in all your boy's troubles. Do you remember? We stupid old women are wiser in some things than wise and clever men like you."

He kissed the faltering handwriting, and reproached himself for not seeing sooner how much it did falter; and he came back to the true mother's heart for comfort and for love.

He found it there in full; but he found too surely, at the same time, that he was come only to lose the sacred consolation when he pined for it the most, and would miss it sorely indeed. His mother was fading very fast and unmistakably; and seeing her as he did, without warning and without preparation, he realized it at once. She was unwilling even to speak of herself, could care for nothing but her longing to pour balm into the wound which had gone so deep. At first she tried to persuade Guy that there had been some mistake in the matter, some misunderstanding which would certainly and easily come right. She wanted to write to Daisy herself—had not the girl written first to her?—and ask her, as she had the right to do, for some fuller explanation of what had passed. But Guy Faucit had the pride of Lucifer, as such men have, and he

would not hear of any compromise here. If she had anything to explain, let her. Though at the time his trust in Daisy had let him pass it by, he felt deeply afterwards the sting of Fairfield's insolence, which his daughter's action seemed to sanction. She had been persuaded that he wanted her money perhaps, after all.

"Would you let such a suspicion rest on your son, mother?" he asked.

And the poor mother was not strong, as she had been, and could not make head against a determination which was too great for her, as it had often been in lesser things. She admired that powerful will of her son's, which was with him so strong a characteristic; but she always feared it for him, and many a time had prayed earnestly that it might not some day take the invidious shape of self-will, and wreck him. She learned to agree with him as to the meaning of his disappointment, too. A fuller account of the interview with Mr. Fairfield showed her that he must be one of those men of whom she had seen so much in her own life, with whom the world and the purse were the be-all and the end-all. Such a man as that was the fit father for a worldly child, and the Daisy of her

son's fancy must have been a dream of delusion. So grieving from her soul for her son's disappointment, she saw that it was idle to talk with him about it, and she accepted it as an accomplished fact, as he did.

He put the subject aside after the first few days; and with his strong power over himself, he hid from his mother resolutely and successfully his fierce struggles with his own pain. His duty here, at all events, was clear and straight before him, and he took the duty up in the strength of his great love for the mother who had been everything to him, till this enchantress deluded him for a time for her own amusement.

The doctor of the place confirmed him in his first fears, and told him that his mother was surely dying. It might be a question of a few weeks or of a few months, but the sentence had been passed and written down. In those weeks or months Guy would not leave her, but devote his heart and soul to making the passage easy to that world of rest and un-striving, whence he himself felt pitilessly far. So he crushed down all his own selfish regrets, and comforted his mother by the assurance that there was no harm done, that the episode in his life had been too short, and he

had never allowed himself to build upon its issue, and that no doubt some day the proper wife would be found for him, for whom the mother's soul longed. After all, a London flirt would never have done. So before she died she came to think it was for the best, and that her worshipped son had but passed through the waters so many pass, with nothing worse than a wetting. He had never, perhaps, been to her what he was during those closing days.

When the bright spring came, he could wheel her out in her chair into the garden, and sit by her side chatting and reading.

There was no pain, happily, attending her peaceful end, and he brought all the resources of his mind to bear upon his dear love. That love was dearer to him than ever, now that he had realized its full truth by contrast, just on the verge of losing it. She tried ever and again to persuade him to go back to London, and resume the work he had so zealously begun. But he put that aside altogether. There was plenty of time for that, he said.

The end lasted three months, and came noiselessly and without warning, as gently as the visit of a friend to the quiet sick-room. They had been talking

seriously and soberly all the long summer-afternoon, with the insects droning their peaceful monotone outside, and the long June shadows creeping lazily over the lawn, on one of those days of still heat when Nature seems crouching for another spring, chiefly of the things above and the things beyond, and the mysteries of that life which had been the mother's chief reality through all her varied days of trouble and of calm. Chief of all her happinesses and prides in her son was her knowledge that he shared that faith as she would have him share it, in the unquestioning obedience and unmurmuring love of a child—the faith that is in one sense higher than charity, in that if it be real it cannot fail to include it. He took up at his mother's request the book they both loved so well, and had read together so often, during those last months especially. And in the deep voice filled with reverence he read to her the opening words of the wonderful chapter in Hebrews—"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Her head fell back in her chair, and she gave a faint cry. He was at her feet in a moment.

"Where are you, my boy?" she whispered. And he took the weak arms and clasped them round

his neck and pressed his lips to hers; and in that mother's kiss she died,—died as she had always wished to die,—in the full confidence of love, alone with him whom most she had lived for, with the loftiest words of Divine prophecy leaving, in his voice, the last earthly echo on her ear. She knew the euthanasia she desired, and it was given her.

He did not call for a moment, for he knew that she was dead. Then he kissed her again, and there broke from him one low cry. For her the evidence of things not seen was now turned to the things themselves; the things hoped for belonged to hope no longer, and the glass she had seen through darkly was broken down, to let the fulness of light in for evermore. But for him the fall of that irrevocable fate was as a sentence of civil death in the grey and purposeless world, which had for him now no meaning left; and he rose up in that dear dead presence, feeling himself hopelessly alone.

* * * * *

He went quietly through the days before the funeral, and through the business which had to be done, like a man in a dream; to all outward seeming unalterably calm. Then he saw his mother laid in the quiet

country grave, and noted with conscious pleasure the signs of affectionate interest and respect which were shown on every side. She had the gift, that lady, of being truly loved and sincerely mourned, after the fashion of the things that pass away, and leave their trace of sorrow, though it be not a deep one, upon the general hurry of surrounding life.

Guy had every sign of sympathy and kindness shown him, but his nature took refuge in itself, and for a day or two still he lived quietly on at home, with no companions but books and thoughts. His mother's death left him the master, with his fellowship, of some few hundreds a year; and he had all his plans of life to make again.

He must do something, he thought; and his mind began to revert to the old rooms at Oxford, for the bar seemed to have no attraction now. But the rooms at Oxford now recalled Daisy Fairfield, from whose image the strong will could not shake itself free, though he did not know yet how deeply it was graven, distracted as he had been from his first pain by his care for his mother. In spite of himself Hope began to lift its head again, and he began to wonder if there could have been, after all, some strange misunderstanding, and if

he had not been over-hasty in yielding at once to pride. Was it possible—that last night—that Daisy did not love him?

A letter from Wilmot, with whom he had exchanged one or two, came to him at this time. It discoursed of many things, and it told him, casually and quietly, that his friend Miss Fairfield had been a great success that season in London, and that she was going to be married. The stroke went home to the desolate heart; but this time Guy was resolved to know something more, and by an impulse he did not care to master, he wrote one brief line to Daisy.

"I hear that you are to be married. Is it true? If it is not, I think that you owe it to me to tell me so. If it is, silence will be enough. I shall wait a week for your answer, though I hope not to wait so long."

He waited for a week, and no answer came. No line, no sign, no message. Within one week more, Guy Faucit was on the high seas, alone upon his road to South America, with no definite purpose in his mind but to find out places he had never seen, and to be as if he had never been to all who had known him. He left behind him directions that the cottage should be

sold, and from time to time communicated with his lawyer. And he picked up strange friends and strange acquaintances, and gathered much wide knowledge of life and lands, serious, self-contained, and silent always. And he was a wanderer on the face of earth for seven years.

END OF VOL. I.

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